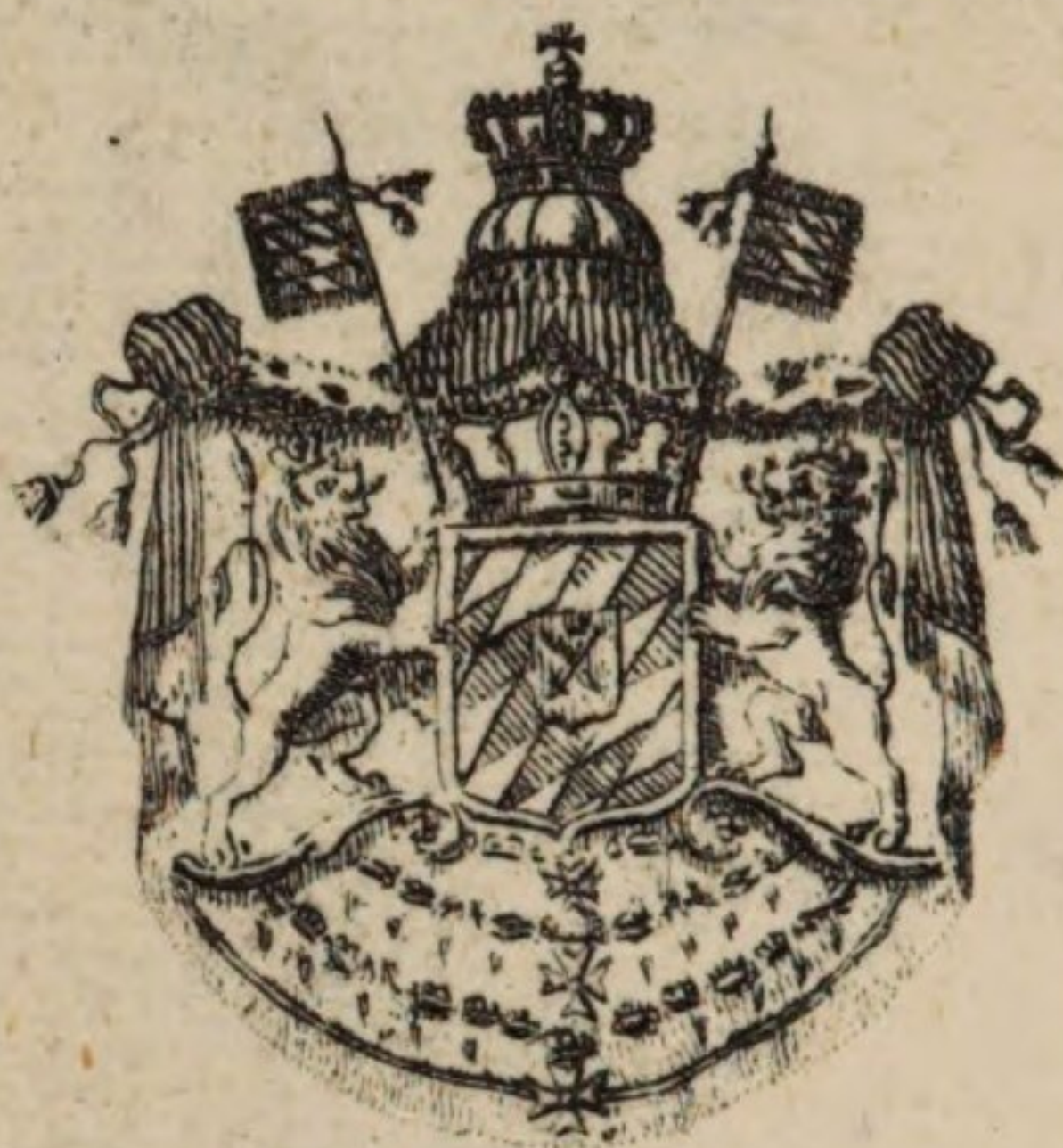
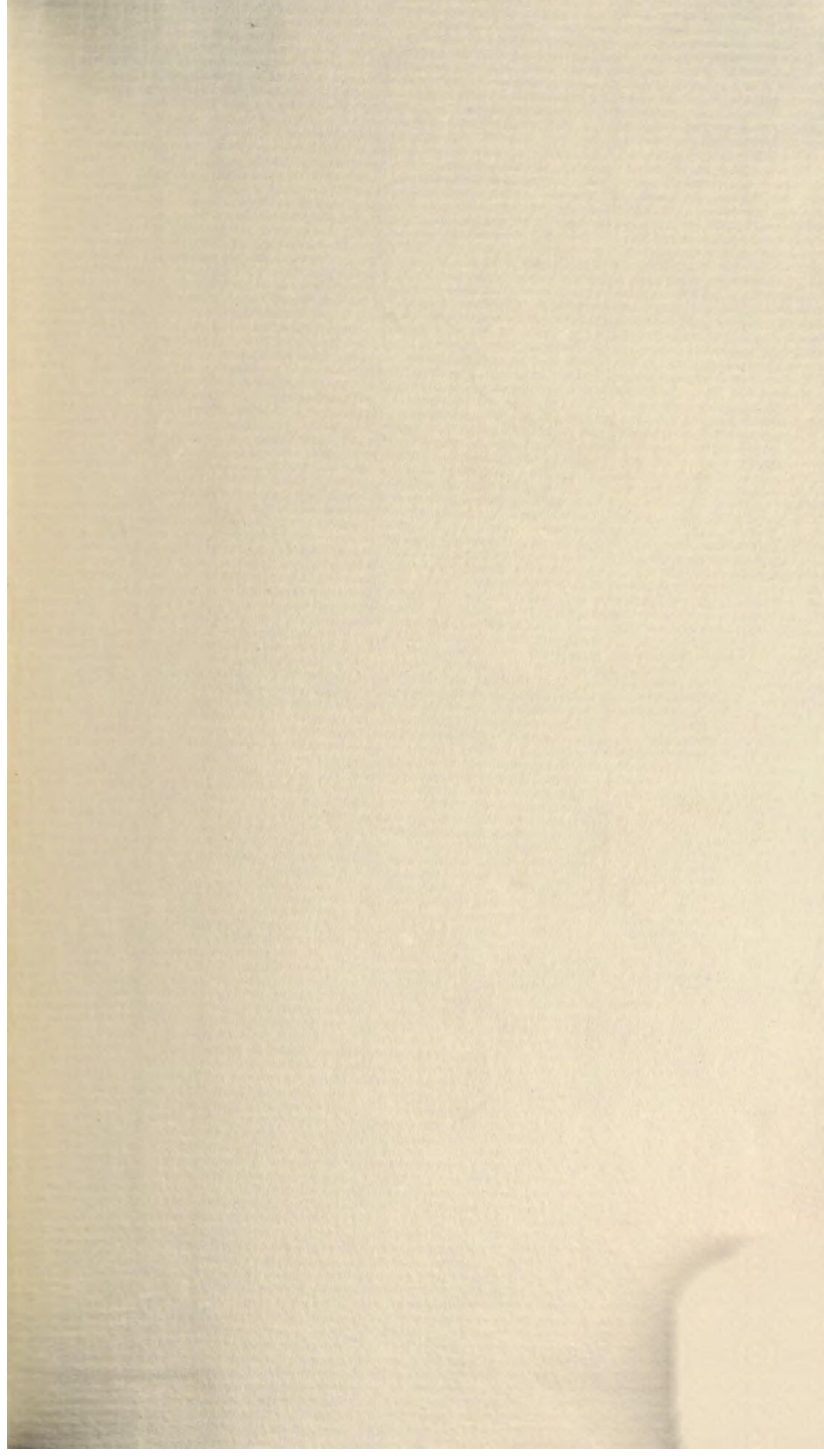


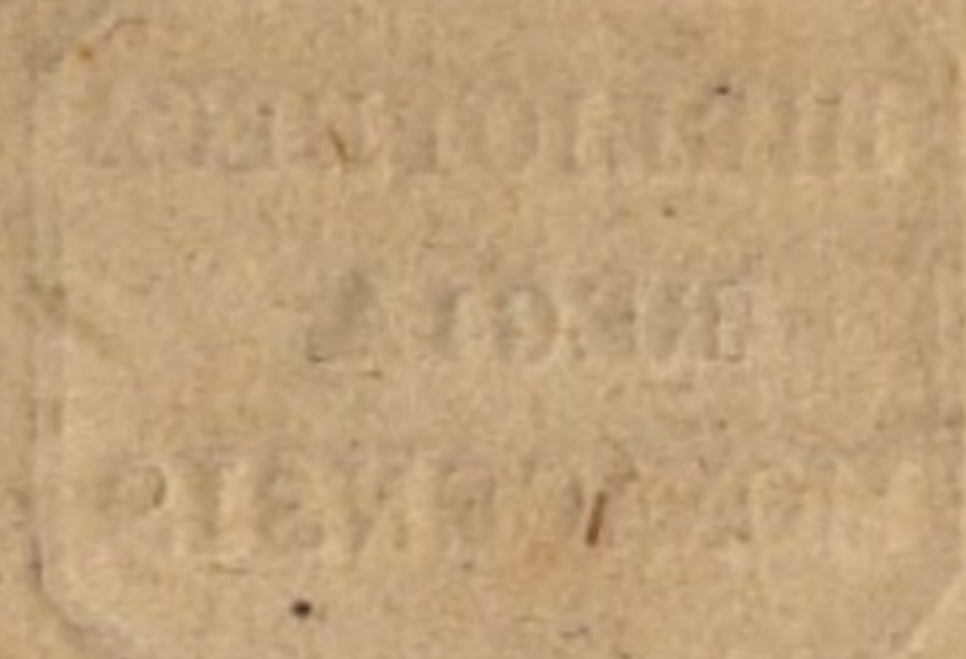
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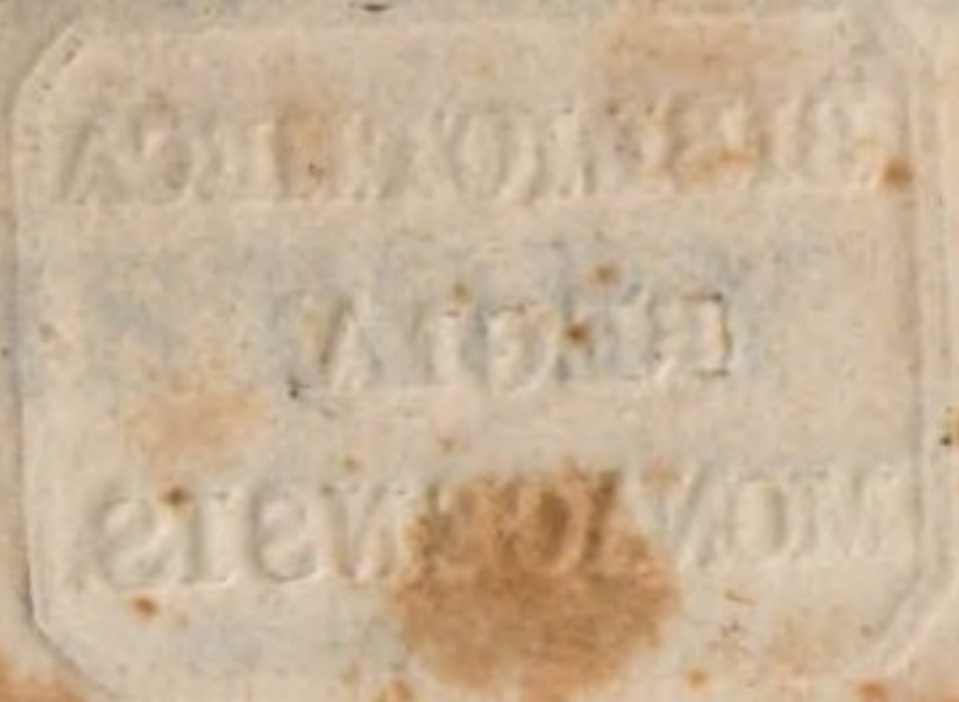




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HISTORY

OF

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The following History was written expressly for the *Athenæum*, one of the leading English Literary Journals. It appeared in several successive numbers, and the high interest it excited has induced the Editor to collect the whole into one volume, and to publish it in this country, where its utility will render it indispensable to the amateurs of English Literature.

BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL
HISTORY
OF THE
BRITISH LITERATURE
OF THE
Last Fifty Years.

R BY ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.



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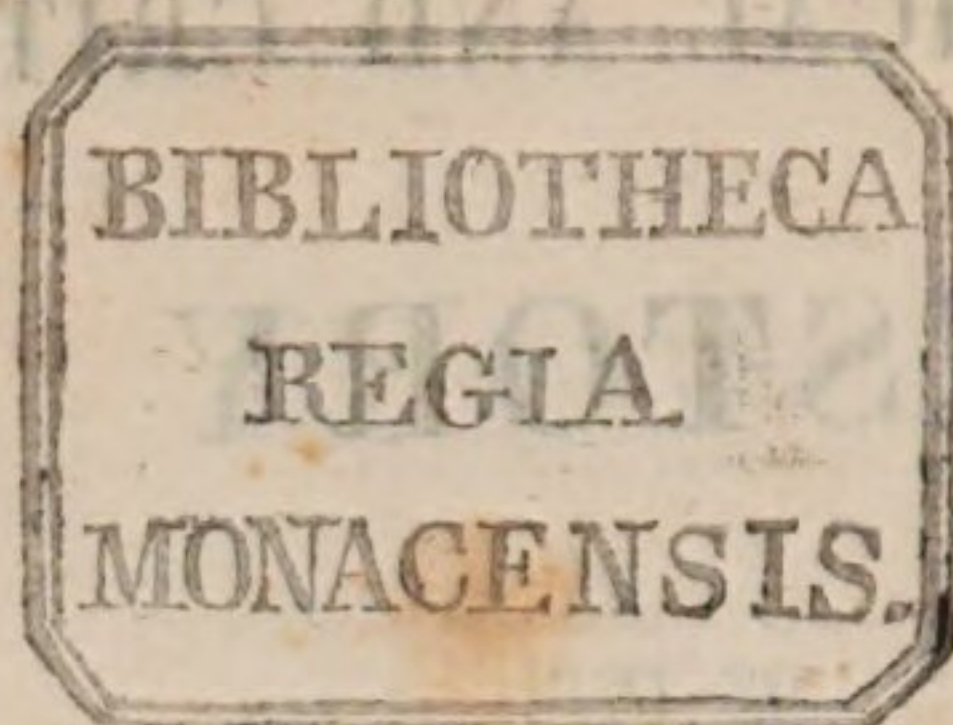
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THE Author of the present work having, of course, omitted his own name in the list of British authors, it will, no doubt, be agreeable to our readers to have the following details.

Allan Cunningham is a native of Scotland, and was brought up to the trade of stone-mason. His genius was first roused on hearing the old popular ballads of his country, and his first productions attracted the attention, and obtained for him the friendship and protection, of the principal literati of Edinburgh.

His principal work, 'The Biography of English Painters, Sculptors, and Architects,' has established his reputation at home and abroad, having been translated and printed in France and Germany. His other works, and among them, 'The Maid of Elvar,' a poetical romance, are distinguished for elegant simplicity of style, and a striking assemblage of chivalrous, rustic, and domestic scenes.

We cannot make him better known to our readers than by laying before them the follow-

ing details of his acquaintance with Hogg, given by the latter in his 'Altrive Tales :—

“ One day, about the beginning of autumn, some three-and-twenty years ago, as I was herding my master's ewes on the great hill of Queensberry, in Nithsdale, I perceived two men coming towards me, who appeared to be strangers. I saw by their way of walking, they were not shepherds, and could not conceive what the men were seeking there, where there was neither path nor aim towards any human habitation. The men approached me rather in a breathless state, from climbing the hill. The one was a tall thin man, of a fairish complexion, and pleasant intelligent features, seemingly approaching to forty, and the other a dark ungainly youth of about eighteen, with a boardly frame for his age, and strongly marked manly features—the very model of Burns, and exactly such a man. Had they been of the same age, it would not have been easy to distinguish the one from the other.

“The eldest came up and addressed me frankly, asking me if I was Mr. Harkness's shepherd, and if my name was James Hogg ? to both of which queries I answered cautiously in the affirmative, for I was afraid they were come to

look after me with an accusation regarding some of the lasses. The younger stood at a respectful distance, as if I had been the Duke of Queensberry, instead of a ragged servant lad herding sheep. The other seized my hand, and said, 'Well, then, sir, I am glad to see you. There is not a man in Scotland whose hand I am prouder to hold.'

"I could not say a single word in answer to this address; but when he called me SIR, I looked down at my bare feet and ragged coat, to remind the man whom he was addressing. But he continued; "My name is James Cunningham, a name unknown to you, though yours is not entirely so to me; and this is my younger brother Allan, the greatest admirer that you have on earth, and himself a young aspiring poet of some promise. You will be so kind as excuse this intrusion of ours on your solitude, for, in truth, I could get no peace either night or day with Allan, till I consented to come and see you.'

"I then stepped down the hill to where Allan Cunningham still stood, with his weather-beaten cheek toward me, and, seizing his hard brawny hand, I gave it a hearty shake, saying something as kind as I was able, and, at the

same time, I am sure as stupid as it possibly could be. From that moment we were friends; for Allan has none of the proverbial Scottish caution about him; he is all heart together, without reserve either of expression or manner: you at once see the unaffected benevolence, warmth of feeling, and firm independence, of a man conscious of his own rectitude and mental energies. Young as he was, I had heard of his name, although slightly, and, I think, seen one or two of his juvenile pieces.

“I had a small bothy upon the hill, in which I took my breakfast and dinner on wet days, and rested myself. It was so small that we had to walk in on all-fours; and when we were in, we could not get up our head any way, but in a sitting posture. It was exactly my own length, and, on the one side, I had a bed of rushes, which served likewise as a seat; on this we all three sat down, and there we spent the whole afternoon,—and, I am sure, a happier group of three never met on the hill of Queensberry. Allan brightened up prodigiously after he got into the dark bothy, repeating all his early pieces of poetry, and part of his brother's to me. The two brothers partook heartily, and without reserve, of my scrip and bottle of sweet milk,

and the elder Mr. Cunningham had a strong bottle with him—I have forgot whether it was brandy or rum, but I remember it was excessively good, and helped to keep up our spirits to a late hour. Thus began at that bothy in the wilderness a friendship, and a mutual attachment between two aspiring Scottish peasants, over which the shadow of a cloud has never yet passed.

“ From that day forward I failed not to improve my acquaintance with the Cunninghams. I visited them several times at Dalswinton, and never missed an opportunity of meeting with Allan when it was in my power to do so. I was astonished at the luxuriousness of his fancy. It was boundless ; but it was the luxury of a rich garden overrun with rampant weeds. He was likewise then a great mannerist in expression, and no man could mistake his verses for those of any other man. I remember seeing some imitations of Ossian by him, which I thought exceedingly good ; and it struck me that that style of composition was peculiarly fitted for his vast and fervent imagination.

“ When Cromek’s ‘ Nithsdale and Galloway Relics ’ came to my hand, I at once discerned the strains of my friend, and I cannot describe

with what sensations of delight I first heard Mr. Morrison read 'The Mermaid of Galloway,' while at every verse I kept naming the author. It had long been my fixed opinion, that if a person could once succeed in the genuine ballad style, his muse was adequate for any other; and after seeing Allan's strains in that work, I concluded that no man could calculate what he was capable of.

"I continued my asseverations to all my intimate friends, that Allan Cunningham was the author of all that was beautiful in the work. Gray, who had an attachment to Cromek, denied it positively on his friend's authority. Grieve joined him. Morrison, I saw, had strong lurking suspicions; but then he stickled for the ancient genius of Galloway. When I went to Sir Walter Scott (then Mr. Scott), I found him decidedly of the same opinion as myself; and he said he wished to God we had that valuable and original young man fairly out of Cromek's hands again.

"I next wrote a review of the work, in which I laid the saddle on the right horse, and sent it to Mr. Jeffrey; but, after retaining it for some time, he returned it with a note, saying that he had read over the article, and was convinced of

the fraud which had been attempted to be played off on the public, but he did not think it worthy of exposure. I have the article, and card, by me to this day.

“ Mr. Cunningham’s style of poetry is greatly changed of late for the better. I have never seen any style improved so much. It is free of all that crudeness and mannerism that once marked it so decidedly. He is now uniformly lively, serious, descriptive, or pathetic, as he changes his subject; but formerly he jumbled all these together, as in a boiling caldron, and when once he began, it was impossible to calculate where or when he was going to end.”

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 lively, serious, descriptive or pathetic, as he
 changes his subject; but formerly he jumbled
 all these together, as in a holiday carol, and
 when once he began, it was impossible to catch
 late where or when he was going to end."

These are some of the remarks which I have
 collected from various quarters, and which I
 send you for your information. I have also
 enclosed a copy of a letter from Mr. Cunningham
 to Mr. [Name] dated the 10th of [Month] last, in
 which he speaks of the same subject in a
 different manner. I have also enclosed a copy
 of a letter from Mr. [Name] to Mr. [Name] dated
 the 15th of [Month] last, in which he speaks of
 the same subject in a different manner.

I have also enclosed a copy of a letter from
 Mr. [Name] to Mr. [Name] dated the 20th of
 [Month] last, in which he speaks of the same
 subject in a different manner. I have also
 enclosed a copy of a letter from Mr. [Name] to
 Mr. [Name] dated the 25th of [Month] last, in
 which he speaks of the same subject in a
 different manner.

HISTORY

OF

BRITISH LITERATURE.

WHEN Burns published his poems, he did so, he said, because some might like to know how a peasant thought and felt : in like manner, and in the same spirit of humility, but with a consciousness of very inferior power, I propose to show how another peasant thinks and feels in matters which interest not his heart alone, but which have largely engaged the attention of the country—namely, the Biographical History and Character of British Literature, from the death of Johnson to that of Scott—a period of nearly fifty years. “Three things, besides a knowledge of the subject, are necessary for you in this matter,” said an illustrious author to me, regarding a similar undertaking—“a clear head, an

honest heart, and a good conscience." My knowledge is not so extensive as I could wish, nor is my head perhaps so clear; but I come to the task with perfect honesty of purpose, and with the determination of saying nothing save what I feel and believe.

There are two great eras in our island literature, which may be named the Elizabethan and the Georgian, after the princes who reigned when the sun of genius shone the brightest. In the former era, the human mind had recently escaped out of darkness into light: the discovery and the diffusion of printing opened up all the sealed fountains of heathen or holy knowledge; the flood which followed rose high on the mountains, and its mark has never since been reached, though sometimes approached;—in the latter era, literary genius was influenced largely by the newly-awakened spirit of investigation: it descended from its flight in the realms of imagination; smiled at its early beliefs; ridiculed ancient influences; and, in many instances, discarding fancy, proceeded to dissect and anatomize, descanting all the while with much bitterness on the corrupt condition of the body political and social. In the days of Spenser, Shakspeare, and Milton, imagination ruled and reigned; poetry

lived much in the upper air, and, like the lark, sung best when nearest heaven;—in the days of Cowper, Burns, Byron, Crabbe, and Scott, the voice of song was more frequently heard from lower elevations; matters of a less regal kind furnished subjects for the Muse; the occupation of the high places, by the elder spirits of poesie, compelled her to seek humbler and obscurer spots, whence she might indulge her passions and her fancies, and pour her desultory song. In the Elizabethan era, the literature of the land was essentially poetical; the subjects chosen scarcely admitted of being treated in prose; and the master spirits of the time looked on it as a matter of chivalry, to maintain the elevation which inspiration claimed. In the Georgian era, prose has not risen, but poetry has descended: we have no prose of a more vigorous or varied nature than that of Dryden; and we have no poetry of the lofty and regal character of the ‘Paradise Lost.’ Our poets have, in general, selected tasks of a familiar, and sometimes homely kind: they have chosen themes which the muses of Spenser and Milton would have spurned; and we cannot help feeling that not a few long and elaborate songs have been sung during the Hanoverian dynasty, which, in point of subject and

sentiment, belong to the realms of prose. Nevertheless, the muse maintains, though with difficulty, her pre-eminence, and sits as yet on the higher peak of the hill.

The character of our literature when Johnson died, and before the song of Cowper was listened to or Burns had begun to sing, was of a very varied kind. Poetry had been polished down till little remained save glitter; and of the voice of the Muse we heard nothing, save the melodious sound, like the singing of a fine lady. The poems of Ossian, which gave a new tone to the poetry of the Continent, and in which we hear the true old note of Celtic song, had no influence in England: Thomson, Collins, and Gray, in whom nature lived, were dead and gone; Churchill was less of a poet than a satirist; Johnson's lamp of verse was a borrowed one, and his song laboured and artificial; Falconer, before he sailed in the *Aurora*, had shown us that beauty could come, as Venus of old, from the great deep; the Wartons, too, had drank at the pure old well of English undefiled; Darwin's song was of nature, but the strain was artificial and the sentiments affected; the laborious splendour and put-on raptures of Hayley went for nothing with the human heart; Wol-

cot, weak, and coarse, and captious, addressed the feeble shafts of his unceremonious verse against the Court and the Academy; while Miss Seward sung so as to attract the notice of Sir Walter Scott and her own little coterie, in which she moved like a light in a dark lantern. The paths of nature and passion were forsaken; the muse, with artificial flowers in her locks and an embroidered train, left the wild wood glade and the river bank, to twang her harp by the side of pumped waters and architectural cascades, with nymphs of stone, and fauns with cloven heel sitting among flowers and shrubs, brought into the sunshine from the conservatory. Much of this must be attributed to the strictures of Johnson, who, in a series of criticisms unequalled for sagacity, acuteness, and sarcasm, seemed desirous of bringing much of what has since made Cowper and Burns immortal, into discredit: he ridiculed the true pastoral of real life; and in preferring the veneer versification of Hoole to the deep rapture and simplicity of Fairfax, supported the artificial against the natural, and made poetry rather a matter of elaborate monotony, than of varied feeling and heart-felt sentiment.

The prose of our literature was, during this

period, of far greater reach and vigour than our verse: it is a question if it ever sunk so low as our poetry did. A number of masculine spirits arose in succession to maintain the dignity of literature. Warburton was one of the foremost; in him learning adorned nature without oppressing it. Johnson—more particularly in his ‘Lives of the Poets’—showed a colossal intellect; in those matchless Memoirs he exhibited such knowledge of human life—such skill in the delineation of character—such sagacity in the detection of faults—such insight into the sources of poetic inspiration, as no one mind perhaps ever before displayed—all this, too, was expressed in a style at once masculine and melodious, where every word conveys meaning, and every sentence teems with thought. Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon, took their stations on the firm table-land of history, and introduced scientific elegance of arrangement, and philosophical accuracy of reasoning, into the narratives of broils and bloodshed—into the monotony of king succeeding king—the miseries of disputed successions and civil wars. Hume, in a style simple, unaffected, and vigorous, related the fortunes of England, from the days of Julius Cæsar to the Revolution which set aside our ancient line of

princes : he traced the constitution of his country from the first glimmer of the lamp of freedom till the light became fixed and permanent ; and painted the social and political condition of the people, through all the vicissitudes of their fortunes. Robertson, amid all the visible labour of his long and harmonious periods, shows great knowledge of his subject, and great skill in handling it ; in clear description, in the picturing forth of characters and events, he is, perhaps, unequalled ; or if equalled at all, it is by Gibbon.

The ‘Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire’ is, without doubt, the most noble history ever produced : the subject is the greatest that a historian could choose, and Gibbon is always master of it ; he is deeply learned, yet he uses his learning with ready ease : like the secondary lights in a picture, it is always visible and always in its proper place. In picturesque splendour of narrative, clear discrimination, characteristic grouping, or in expressing in one passage the result of whole histories, I hold him without an equal : his style is too ornate ; and he gives us a sneer sometimes for a sentiment, and irony for reasoning ; but, as we said of Johnson, every word conveys a meaning, and every sentence teems with thought. Others hardly inferior to those leading

spirits flourished at the same time, north as well as south. Nor was oratory silent: Burke, in a series of speeches which, for classic beauty, harmonious vigour, far-reaching sagacity, profound speculation, and fiery yet regulated ecstasy of thought, are perhaps unequalled in ancient or modern times, stood like a giant even amid such men as Pitt, Fox, Grattan, and Sheridan.

While yet many of these eminent persons lived, a change took place among the nations, which not only affected the social and political condition of man, but wrought a revolution in our literature, now more or less visible in the chief works of the leading spirits of our times: a Republic was established in America, and a Republic was attempted in France. This had been foretold by signs which could not be misunderstood. The people of America, sprung from those who were mostly sufferers for conscience or freedom's sake, were grown rich, numerous, and intelligent: they resolved no longer to be treated as dependents; but, taking the attitude of freemen, demanded to be represented, since they were to be taxed. This was resisted in blood—we know the result; but as yet the end was not. France with a blind policy had drawn the sword of despotism in the cause of freedom,

and succeeding in the strife, came home a convert to the cause she had espoused. She turned her eyes to contemplate her own condition ; all was alien to the new notions she had acquired, and she longed for change : this had been for some time silently preparing. The literature of the land, subjected to the government and to the church, fretted in its fetters, and forthwith assailed all who exercised power, with ridicule as cutting as a sharpened sword, and with sarcasm and irony more venomous than a poisoned arrow. The Revolution followed. The upset of an ancient monarchy, with all its deep-rooted dependencies, and the establishment of a Republic in its place, could not happen without moving the minds and touching the hearts of remote nations ; even in our own island we were deeply moved. Here, where the King is nothing, and the Parliament every thing—where, if oppression comes, it comes from the many—where the constitution is open to all who comprehend its mysteries—where the law is so long in deciding, that passion has time to cool—and where we may speak our minds without fear of the knout or the fetter—men longed for more liberty. Nobles signed themselves citizens—ladies assumed the dress, and, with the dress, the free-

dom of the free dames of Paris—sculptors modelled kings discrowned and offered up on the altar of independence—bards sung of the nobility of genius and of men who held the patent of their honours from God alone: in short, freedom coloured the speech of the orator—the sermon of the priest; and wherever two or three were met together, their talk was of liberty and equality, of the reign of reason and opinion, and of the golden age of knowledge, the eating of whose fruit would be unaccompanied with a curse.

Literature—most of it at least—changed its tone and aspect with the times. Our prose could gain little in dignity from any alteration; but the clang and uproar of the events we have alluded to, awoke the muses from their stupor or trance, and Cowper in England, and Burns in Scotland, gave utterance to their emotions in the language of life and feeling—nature was restored once more to British song. It is true, that both those eminent poets were in the enjoyment of fame before the French Revolution; but it is also true that the chief poem of the first was unwritten, and all the poetry of the second, when the independence of America had been fought for and won. I do not, however, expressly

claim for them an exclusive inspiration arising from the disturbed and yeasty state of public feeling; no doubt, their own noble natures inclined them to indulge in free and unshackled song; but I consider that this natural yearning was stimulated and strengthened by the free and investigating tone in which men indulged, both in public and private; and I look upon this to be a more rational way of accounting for the change which took place, than by imputing it, as an eminent critic has done, to the influence of Percy's 'Reliques of Ancient English Poetry.' It should be borne in mind, that the beautiful ballads published by Percy were not new; that they were familiar to all well informed Englishmen as household words, and had all along exercised an influence, to a certain extent, over all minds alive to natural emotion and rude nervous language. Be that as it may, a salutary reformation was wrought—the muses were brought back from the rattle and the go-cart to lift their voices as of old; and the isle of Britain, east and west, north and south, broke out into voluntary song.

Having thus drawn briefly the character of our former literature, and indicated the nature of the change which took place, I shall pro-

ceed to the fulfilment of my plan, and, in a connected series of Critical Biographies, give an account of our POETRY, ROMANCE, HISTORY, BIOGRAPHY, the DRAMA, and CRITICISM. I shall draw my information from the best sources to which I have access, and sketch the characters of the dead and the living with all possible impartiality. To secure this, I have come under no obligations for information; and I write chiefly from a memory seldom faithless in matters concerning genius.

BRITISH POETRY.

COWPER.

AT the head of that illustrious band of poets, who restored natural emotion and the language of life to British song, stands William Cowper. He was of noble extraction, and counted kin with Lord Chancellors and Earls ; he was studious in youth, fond of verse, and was bred to the law—a more congenial employment for a follower of the muse than many seem willing to admit : Scott may be cited as an example of a not unsuccessful union of the two. Cowper, however, inherited from his mother a natural timidity, which rendered him too sensitive to be successful in a line which requires a hardihood of mind, and a certain assurance, to which in vain he tried to harden his faculties : this constitutional infirmity, by preventing him from being installed as a clerk in the House of Lords, ruined his fortune and secured his fame. The pain of his failure threw him on religion ; the

study of the Scriptures threw him upon poetry ; and as his works began to be talked of in the world, and bring fame to their author, the gloom which had settled down like a cloud on his soul passed off, and the man and the poet shone out like the sun at noonday. There is nothing finer in all the range of biography than the history of Cowper, when the voice of fame and the inquiry of noble relatives after the lost and secluded man, brought him forth from his solitude. His letters, which before were filled with fears for the present and doubts for the future, became cheerful and gay ; his muse indulged in a bolder and more original strain ; and he came out in the sunshine to enjoy the melody of birds and brooks, and the society of the young and the lovely.

In the year 1782, Cowper made his appearance in the world as a poet. He published—1. ‘ Table Talk ;’ 2. ‘ Progress of Error ;’ 3. ‘ Truth ;’ 4. ‘ Expostulation ;’ 5. ‘ Hope ;’ 6. ‘ Charity ;’ 7. ‘ Conversation ;’ and 8. ‘ Retirement.’ Their names indicate their characters ; and it may be further said, that his aim in all is, to communicate to the world his own perceptions of the beauty, and truth, and consolation of religion. This is a common task, and belongs to

the pulpit; but it was not executed in a common way: the language is terse, vigorous, and happy—there are snatches of stern satire, and pictures of moral loveliness scattered as thick and as beautiful as flowers on an unmown meadow. The world wondered who this new monitor might be, and critics were not wanting, who, judging poetry by the music of its bells, hesitated to admit that his verse belonged to inspiration. Towards the close of the year 1784—about the time that Johnson died—appeared Cowper's noblest poem, 'The Task.' In accounting for the odd name, he says in his preface, "A lady, fond of blank verse, demanded a poem of that kind from the author, and gave him the *SOFA* for a subject. He obeyed, and, having much leisure, connected another subject with it; and pursuing the train of thought to which his situation and turn of mind led him, brought forth at length, instead of the trifle which he at first intended, a serious affair—a volume." 'The Task' was received with an all but universal welcome: it contained so many moving pictures of men and manners—such fine landscapes of all seasons, filled with the breathing inhabitants of the land, and gave the beauties and the deformities of all, with a fidelity at once brilliant

and delicate. It is impossible to describe this fine poem better than by saying that it treats, in a masterly way, of all that affects us here, or influences us hereafter ; that it pleads the cause of the poor and the desolate in the presence of the rich ; admonishes the rich of their duty to their country, their cottars, and their God ; takes the senate to task ; shakes the scourge of undying verse over the pulpit ; holds a mirror before the profligacy of cities till they shudder at their own shadow, and exhibit to the hills and dales of the country, an image of the follies of their sons and daughters. The satire was lively, discerning, and keen ; the pathos without puling, and the tenderness had strength. The poet wandered, it is true, from topic to topic ; yet he bound the remotest things together in the bands of sympathy and wit. The verse is free, unrestrained, and vigorous ; and though some acute critics averred that it sounded like that of the ‘ Night Thoughts,’ it is original in structure, language, and sentiment. Is this the voice of the epigrammatic Young ?

How in the name of soldiership and sense
Should England prosper, when such things as smooth
And tender as a girl, all essenced o’er
With odours, and as profligate as sweet,

Who sell their laurel for a myrtle wreath,
 And love when they should fight,—when such as these
 Presume to lay their hand upon the ark
 Of her magnificent and awful cause!

Cowper's next great work was the Translation of Homer: the fidelity and graphic vigour of his versions of the Iliad and Odyssey, are not so warmly welcomed by the world as they will yet be. The smooth and flowing melody of Pope charms the public ear; yet Cowper is more than his match in the gentler passages: take, for instance, the description of the Cestus of Venus:

It was an ambush of sweet snares, replete
 With love, desire, soft intercourse of hearts,
 And music of resistless whispered sounds,
 Which from the wisest win their best resolves.

In the loftier parts, too, he was alike masterly. The descent of Apollo, in the first book, reveals the god in all his terror and beauty:

Down from Olympus, with his radiant bow,
 And his full quiver o'er his shoulder slung,
 Marched in his anger: shaken as he moved,
 His rattling arrows told of his approach.

The *arming of Achilles* contains a sterner picture:—

Amidst them all Achilles arm'd;
 He gnashed his teeth, fire glimmered in his eyes,

Anguish intolerable wrung his heart,
And fury against Troy, whilst he put on
Those glorious arms, the labour of a god.

The latter years of this great poet's life were clouded and mournful. He lived long bereft of reason; and though now and then favoured with glimpses of returning consciousness, his understanding was never wholly restored. He was mild, gentle, and upright, and so retiring and timid, that he regarded strangers with apprehension: his friends loved him with no ordinary tenderness; yet among those associates there were some who molested him with fears that innocent gaiety was in itself sinful, riding in a coach vanity, and keeping company with the titled ones of the earth, unacceptable on high. He was born in 1731, and died in 1800, leaving a reputation not destined soon to fade.

BURNS.

THE poet whose character I have endeavoured to delineate was highly born and well educated; the poet of whom I am now to write was, by birth, a peasant, and his education was according to his station. Robert Burns was

born on the banks of Doon, near the old kirk of Alloway, 25th January, 1759; his early years were spent in toil too severe for even his vigour of body; he threshed in the barn, reaped, mowed, and held the plough, before he was fifteen; nor when he grew up to manhood did this drudgery promise to end in ease and comfort. Such was his untoward fortune, that he saw nothing better for him, he said, in looking down the dim vista of futurity, than the moil of a galley slave, and the old age of a public mendicant. The light of poesie dawned on him amid all this darkness; his sensibility was deep; his passions overflowing and strong; and he loved—nay, we may say, adored, whatever was gentle and beautiful. He had an eloquent word and an inspired song for every fair face that smiled on him; and a witty saying and a fierce lampoon for every rustic who thwarted or contradicted him. He imputed his first inspiration to love: the lovelines and simplicity of a young girl, who reaped in harvest by his side, drew forth his first song; and his latest was addressed to a haughtier and higher beauty, to whom he had once in vain poured out the richest incense the muse had to offer. It is remark-worthy, that the most natural and impas-

sioned songs in the whole compass of our literature were written by a ploughman-lad in honour of the rustic lasses around him.

While his father lived, he wrought under his direction with a willing and anxious hand; and when he died, he wrought with the same diligence to support his mother and his brothers and sisters, who, but for his help, had been desolate. Barren ground, bad seasons, and bad seed, united to render his toils unavailing: his passions, too, became his enemies, and he saw nothing better for him than to emigrate to the West Indies, and under a kindlier sun endeavour to mend his fortunes. Before his departure, however, he determined to publish his poems and songs; but there were no Tonsons or Murrays in Kyle; there were, nevertheless, Aikens, Hamiltons, and Parkers, who so effectually aided his views, that he was enabled, in July, 1786, to send forth a little volume, laden with all his hopes, to the world. Never was poet's song received with so much affection, and even rapture. The volume, we may say, flew from cottage to hall, and from hall to castle; the farmer at his plough, the shepherd with his flock, the country maiden at her wheel, were not less moved than were the well educated, the

college bred, the high born, and the far descended. Nor was it any wonder, for the poems were all life and energy, and bore the impress of a warm heart and a mind of the highest order. They abounded with passions and opinions fresh from nature; contained vivid pictures of domestic happiness, rustic gladness, and the raptures of innocent love. The wit of the clouted shoe was there without its coarseness; there was a prodigality of humour, but no grossness; a pathos ever natural and manly; a social tenderness that readily allied itself with mirth; and a sublime morality which, avoiding moroseness, sought to soothe and elevate. To a love of human nature he added an affection for the flowers of the valley, the fowls of the air, the beasts of the field: he acknowledged the tie of social sympathy which bound his heart to all created things, and carried his universal goodwill so far, as to entertain hopes of universal redemption, and the restoration of the doomed spirits to power and lustre. All this, and much more, was told in the language of humble life, in a dialect reckoned barbarous by scholars, but which, coming from the lips of inspiration, became classic and elevated.

The name of Burns, and the fame of his

poetry, flashed like sunshine over the land, and, as Byron said of himself, he lay down to sleep obscure, and awoke eminent. The first scholars of Scotland courted his acquaintance; and the highest and the lowest names in the country were huddled together in the subscription for a new edition of his works. He was invited to Edinburgh, where Blair called him the Lowland Ossian; Burnet took him to his evening parties, where he drank wine out of bottles wreathed with flowers, in the manners of the ancients; Mackenzie handed him to a wider fame in a generous and venturous critique; and the Duchess of Gordon admired his wit, and took his arm as she walked from the drawing-room to the supper table. The inspired Peasant of the West was received and entertained as a sort of wonder: he was exhibited at the tables of the great, that they might make merry with Samson; lords nodded approbation to the sallies of his wit, and ladies sat round him in ring, fanning his forehead with their plumes, surprised with his untutored eloquence. Some pension, post, or place, was expected by the country to be bestowed on the poet: one wrote to him that the government would surely do something; a second hinted at royal patronage; while a third,

wiser than any, whispered, "return to the fanners and the furrowed field, and be independent." He was praised, caressed, and feasted, till the taste for things rustic was cloyed, and men desired to see something new; lords and ladies neglected to invite him; and when they met him by chance, saluted him coldly, or passed him with averted eyes. He stayed for nearly a whole year in Edinburgh, and seeing at last that his hopes were vain, retired in deep anger and disgust to Nithsdale; took the farm of Ellisland from Miller of Dalswinton; married Jane Armour, and resolved to be prudent and laborious. But all his speculations regarding independence were doomed to be unfortunate: the farm required more attention than the poet was disposed to bestow on it; he resigned it; accepted a situation in the Excise, and lived in the hopes of rising to the station of supervisor.

"The luckless star that ruled his lot" interposed; he felt, as the world now feels, that his country had neglected him; and, in the bitterness of disappointed hope, spoke too freely about freedom, the natural dignity of genius, and the fame which talents bring, compared to the rank which a king bestows. He was given to understand that his hopes of preferment were

blasted; and his continuing in his humble office depended on his silence. He survived this degradation a year or more, but never held up his head again; he died in the summer of 1796, more of a broken heart than of any other illness.

In person, Burns was tall, well made, and muscular, and of such strength and activity, that few could match him in the toil which husbandry requires. His forehead was broad, his hair inclining to curl, his visage very swarthy, his eyes large, dark, and lustrous, and his voice deep and manly. As a poet he stands in the first rank. His conceptions are all original; his thoughts are new and weighty; his style unborrowed; and he owes no honour to the subjects which his muse selected, for they are ordinary, and such as would have tempted no poet, save himself, to sing about. All he has written is distinguished by a happy carelessness; a fine elasticity of spirit; and a singular felicity of expression—by the ardour of an impassioned heart and the vigour of a clear understanding. His language is familiar, yet dignified; careless, yet concise; he sheds a redeeming light on all he touches; whatever his eye glances on rises into life and beauty. Of Beauty itself, he has written

with more fervour and inspiration than all other modern poets put together; the compliments he pays are destined to live while we have loveliness in the land:

There's nought but care on every han',
In every hour that passes,
What signifies the life o' man,
An' 'twere na for the lasses!
Auld Nature swears the lovely dears
Her noblest work she classes;
Her 'prentice han' she tried on man,
And then she made the lasses.

He is the poet of freedom as well as of beauty; his song of the Bruce, his "Man's a Man for a' that," and others of the same mark, will endure while the language lasts. Peace be with his great and injured spirit!

CRABBE.

I HAVE seen a long and ingenious critical comparison drawn between Burns and Crabbe; the resemblance lay most in the writer's fancy, for in all, save humility of subject, they are unlike. Burns flies, Crabbe creeps; the Scotsman is all fiery energy, buoyant feeling, and kindly sympathy with the woes and joys of man;

the Englishman is a cold and remorseless dissector, who pauses, with the streaming knife in his hands, to explain how strongly the blood is tainted, what a gangrene is in the liver, how completely the sources of health are corrupted, and that the subject is a thorough bad one. The former mourns over human frailty; the latter crucifies it. Yet those who like to look at the sad estate into which husbandmen have fallen in these our latter days of "tolls and taxes," and compare the peasant pacified, but not filled, with the parish spoon, sitting with his children in the dust,

Half mad, half fed, half sarkit,

with those strong-nerved yeomen, and their grass-fields, cows, and cottages, who twanged their victorious bows at Agincourt, may consult George Crabbe.

He was born in the year 1754, at Aldborough, in Suffolk; received a classical education at Cambridge; studied surgery with the intention of practising it, but, not succeeding, turned his thoughts on the church. In the church, men sometimes rise by merit; more frequently by patronage: to secure the latter, Crabbe wrote and published, in the year 1783, a poem

called ‘The Village.’ He commenced as he concluded; he is the poet of reality, and of reality in humble life; he discards at once all the illusions of the muse, and sings “the honest, open, naked truth.” To him, the Daisy of Burns, covered with beauty and diffusing fragrance, would have been but a weed; and the Mouse, surrounded with images of moral sympathy, and even terror, a creature worthy of the hob-nailed heel and the “murdering pattle.” His views in verse are thus expressed in ‘The Village:’—

The village life, and every care that reigns
O’er youthful peasants and declining swains;
What labour yields, and what, that labour past,
Age in its hour of languor finds at last;
What form the real picture of the poor,
Demand a song—the muse can give no more.

He goes on to say, that the muses of old sung of happy rustics, because they were unacquainted with the sorrows of their condition; for his own part, he disdains to hide the ills of life under poetic trappings, and resolves

To paint the cot
As truth will paint it, and as bards will not.

That he saw only misery and depravity in the rustics around him, was, we suspect, the

fault of his own eyes; for our part, we consider that happiness is pretty equally diffused among the children of men; the hind, when he has turned his stipulated number of furrows, goes home rejoicing; the dairy-maid, when she surveys her ranks of bowls, mantling with yellow cream, or sees the rich butter follow the plunges of the churn-staff; nay, the ragged mortal who sweeps a crossing, and with a piteous face holds out the reliques of an old hat to catch the half-pence pitched, not given, by the hasty passer by, are all as happy, perhaps happier than ministers of state, or lords of high degree approaching the throne, and whispering

A secret word or twa, man.

I know not what Fox, and Burke, and Johnson, thought of 'The Village,' and the lazar-house pictures which it contained; but this is certain, the author obtained a small appointment in the church, and silenced for twenty-seven years the stern tongue of his muse.

He had been forgotten by poets and critics when he published 'The Parish Register,' and in the year 1810, burst out upon the world with 'The Borough,' a Poem; it was found that time had increased his intensity of observation;

had sharpened his sense of character, and improved his manner of communicating his notions to the world; but had not brightened the moral darkness of his early landscapes, nor shown him, with Burns, how much happiness and virtue the roofs of fifty smoking cabins covered. Alms-houses, hospitals, and prisons, with their paupers, their diseases, and their felons, are subjects little grateful to poetry. In this work—strong as it is in originality of character, and brief, clear, and decided, as most of its pictures are—the poet mistook, or eluded, the aim and purpose of poetry. He has given a Newgate Calendar in verse. If, weary with work, and sick of the cares of the world, we seek consolation in Crabbe, as we do in almost all other poets, instead of being soothed and elevated above our nature with the divinity of song, we should think of the grave—of a six-penny leap into eternity from the top of the FIRE Monument. No; God deliver us from Crabbe in the hour of depression. Pictures of moral, and mental, and bodily degradation, are frequent through all his works; he is one of Job's chief comforters to the people; he shows the misery of their estate on earth, and then consoles them with the healing doctrine, that

“Hell was not made for dogs.” This “Come curse me, Jacob, and come defy me, Israel” sort of style, is as unjust as it is unpoetic. I hold it to be bad taste, too, in the muse, to shut her right eye on all the virtues, and open her left eye on all the vices and miseries of man, and then pitching her voice to a tone sarcastic and dolorous, sing of nothing but the crying crimes and running sores of human nature. There is something wrong in the mind or taste of the poet who looks on creatures with ragged clothes and unswept houses, as utterly fallen and reprobate; and who dips his brush in the lake of darkness, and paints merry old England as a vagrant and a strumpet.

It is pleasing to turn from the stern—nay, terrible pictures of Crabbe, to his more soft, graceful and touching delineations; it is these which enable us to endure the misery of his more elaborate sketches, and which, like a spring amid burning sands, cheer and refresh us, and connect the poet with the kindlier sympathies of human nature. Had he mingled these more frequently with his gloomier strains; had he given us as much of the good as of the evil of life, he would have obtained a place in our hearts next to Cowper and Burns, who, of

all modern poets, have appealed most extensively to the general feelings of mankind. It would form a curious chapter in biography, to examine how little the works of men correspond with their nature. Crabbe was meek and affectionate; gentle and generous; gave largely to the poor; nay, followed them from his door, when servants had repulsed them, and made amends both with tongue and hand. His poetry, instead of coming fresh from the heart, was the offspring of a system early settled and constantly followed; he had determined that his muse, instead of walking like a pastoral damsel barefoot among flowers, and crushing fragrant berries at every step, should rough it among the thorns and briars of the world; and for the cheering and mirth-awakening songs of the elder muses, should weep and wail, tear her hair, gnash her teeth, and refuse to be comforted. As a man, he was widely beloved, and as a clergyman, deeply respected. He was particularly anxious about the education of the poor, and gave much of his time to its furtherance. The Sunday School was his favourite place of resort: he loved to sit and listen to the children; and strangers, who desired to see the venerable and inspired man, usually went

there between seven and eight in the evening—such visits were frequent. To a friend who called towards the close of his life, he said, pointing to the children, “I love them much; and now old age has made me a fit companion for them.” He died, 8th February, 1832, in the 78th year of his age. The people of Trowbridge closed their windows, and many went into mourning from respect to his memory.

ROGERS.

! If we observe in the strains of Crabbe, a leaning to the sneering and the cynical, we meet with no such unwelcome things in the works of Samuel Rogers: like Crabbe, he is distinguished for a terseness of expression; for thinking correctly and writing clearly; for loving scenes of humble life, and preferring scenes which, like those of Gainsborough, belong more to reality than imagination. Here the resemblance ends; the tasteful muse of Rogers selects topics of a pure and poetic order; he refuses to unlatch the door of the lazaret-house; he delights in contemplating whatever is fair and beautiful; and has no wish to de-

scribe Eden for the sake of showing the Evil Spirit crawling among the trees, and lying like a toad at the ear of beauty and innocence to inspire mischief.

There are three poems, all of original merit, with something of similarity in title—the ‘Pleasures of Imagination’—the ‘Pleasures of Hope’—and the ‘Pleasures of Memory.’ With the titles the similitude ends. The poem of Aken-side is for the present, that of Campbell for the future, and that of Rogers for the past. There is most fine poetry in the first, most enthusiasm in the second, and most human nature in the third. ‘The Pleasures of Memory’ was published in the year 1792, and became at once popular. To the spirit of original observation, to the fine pictures of men and manners, and to the remarks on the social and domestic condition of the country, which mark the disciples of the newer school of verse, are added the terseness, smoothness, and harmony of the old. The poem abounds with capital and brilliant hits; with passages which remain on the memory, and may be said to please rather than enchant one; to take silent possession of the heart, rather than fill it with immediate rapture. Hazlitt, with some of that perverseness which

even talent is not without, said, the chief fault of Rogers was want of genius and taste. Perhaps in the whole list of living men of genius, no one can be named whose taste in poetry is so just and delicate. This is apparent in every page of his compositions; nay, he is even fastidious in his taste, and rejects much in the pictures of manners and feelings which he paints, which other authors, whose taste is unquestioned, would have used without scruple. His diction is pure, and his language has all the necessary strength without being swelling or redundant: his words are always in keeping with the sentiment. He has, in truth, great strength; he says much in small compass, and may sometimes be charged with a too great anxiety to be brief and terse. It was the error of the school in which his taste was formed, to be over anxious about the harmony and polish of the verse; and he may be accused of erring with his teachers. Concerning the composition of 'The Pleasures of Memory,' it is related that he corrected, transposed, and changed, till he exhausted his own patience, and then turning to his friends, he demanded their opinions, listening to every remark, and weighing every observation. This plan of correction is liable

to serious objections. The poet is almost sure of losing in dash and vigour more than what he gains by correctness ; and, as a whole, the work is apt to be injured, while individual parts are bettered. Poetry is best hit off at one heat of the fancy : the more it is hammered and wrought on, the colder it becomes. The sale of ‘ The Pleasures of Memory ’ continued to be large, though ‘ The Pleasures of Hope ’ came into the market.

Rogers was some thirty years old when his first poem was published ; when his second appeared he was fifty. A great change had come over the world in the interval : the little world of the muse had undergone a sort of revolution. A number of eminent poets had arisen—not men who, like Gray, were content to print one small volume, and then remain silent—but bards who poured out, fast and bright, a succession of epic poems and rhyme romances, all long compositions, and who promised more. Nor was this all ; with the exception of Campbell, the whole of those poets, from natural impulse or taste, had strung their harps to other melody than what had hitherto charmed : they were not content with filling the market with poetic wares ; they changed pattern and

texture, and led away the public taste from a commodity which had been fashionable for a century. With all these drawbacks, 'The Voyage of Columbus' was favourably received; the story of that navigator's wondrous undertaking is indeed ever interesting; we peruse and reperuse the tale of his fortunes with undiminishing interest, and set him down as one of the most undaunted heroes of Christian chivalry. The whole undertaking is of itself poetic; no one can take away, add, or embellish; and it is to the credit of Rogers's taste, that he sought, by a succession of scenes, copied from the picturesque events of the voyage, to bring the whole before the reader's fancy. In this he succeeded; yet the poem did not make its way so readily to men's hearts as 'The Pleasures of Memory.' Little that was new was said about Columbus; and I believe I am right in saying, that we prefer history in prose to history in verse.

Some two years or so after the publication of 'Columbus,' the poem of 'Jacqueline' made its appearance, accompanied by the poem of 'Lara,' by Byron. This was an injudicious step; it was not possible for the muse of the elder bard to have fair play: the world was bewitched

with the genius of the young one ; was desirous of redressing the grievous wrong done him by the *Edinburgh Review* ; and, moreover, knowing that he was a little wild and whimsical, looked for some of his personal adventures in the burning lines which he wrote. The mild, the amiable, and the graceful Jacqueline, was an unfit companion for the moody, mysterious, and revengeful Lara. With how little justice 'Jacqueline' was looked coldly on, may be gathered from the following fine passage : others as good, and some better, abound.

Soon as the sun the glittering pane
On the red floor in diamonds threw,
His songs she sung, and sung again,
Till the last light withdrew.
Every day, and all day long,
He mused or slumbered to a song.
But she is dead to him, to all !
Her lute hangs silent on the wall ;
And on the stairs and at the door
Her fairy foot is heard no more !
At every meal an empty chair
Tells him that she is not there.

This ill-assorted union was dissolved by the bookseller ; no estrangement, however, took place between the poets ; they were frequently to be seen and found together : Moore, and, for a time, Campbell, were added to the coterie,

and many jests were scattered about Lara and Jacqueline, and much wine consumed. Some one said to Byron, it was a Sternhold and Hopkins sort of affair. Rogers aspired no more to tell true-love stories, either serious or comic: he probably desired to read his noble companion a lesson in his next essay, which was the poem entitled 'Human Life.' This work stands high in public esteem; it contains passages worthy of any poet: the chief fault is the breadth and length of the subject. It is seldom, I fear, that the sad condition of man is changed, or his morals amended, by gentle verse and courteous admonition. When the poet makes every touch of his satiric thong tell on the culprit like a Russian knout, his powers are respected; but Rogers had no desire to tie up human nature and give it a flogging; he passed it under a tender and merciful review, and spoke of it as a work honourable to its maker. The poet saw only the bright side of the scene;—a man with choice fruits on his garden walls, fine wines on his sideboard, savoury dishes done to a turn on his table, and money in the bank to work while he sleeps, will not likely think that human life is a gift scarce worth receiving. He loved to look at man

Well fed, well lodged, and gently handled.

His last poem is that called 'Italy;' it abounds with fine passages, with descriptions which have all the brightness of Claude's landscapes, and with groups which have the invention of Flaxman and the gracefulness of Chantrey. It may be instanced as a confirmation of my opinion of his taste, that he has illustrated this work by aid of the pencils of Stothard and Turner, in a way so beautiful, that it surpasses all other works in the exquisite grace and simplicity of its embellishments.

Rogers is the only affluent worshipper of the muse—he is a banker, and as such bears an honest name; he lives in St. James's Place, and has some choice pictures by his friend Sir Joshua Reynolds, and many matters rare and curious; among which, the agreement of Milton regarding 'Paradise Lost,' and of Dryden respecting his translation of Virgil, both bearing their signatures, are the most remarkable. He is, in all respects, an accomplished gentleman; he has always borne his fame and fortune meekly; his conversation is rich and various, concise and epigrammatic. He has lived much in the society of the learned, the noble, and the

inspired; and of all whom he knew he has something clever to relate. He has lived some seventy years in the world, and, as he has seen much, and is not without a spirit of observation, his Reminiscences would make a surpassing book. He has the best taste in painting of any of our poets, nor is his sense of sculpture inferior.

SCOTT.

SEVERAL of the leading poets of our day have been inspired with the present—Sir Walter Scott was inspired with the past. To him, as a poet, the world before his eyes was encumbered with matters too mean for his muse; she scorned communion with the times, out of which the soul of chivalry had been crushed, from which picturesque splendour had departed, and in which there was no pomp and antique revelry. She looked on the world around, and seeing it filled with steam-engines, spinning-jennies, and men laying down rail-roads, or teaching water to run within walls of hewn stone, and other mechanical and rule-of-three sort of things—glanced back on other days,

where she saw so much according to her own taste and spirit, that she strung her harp and sung of the princes of the Stuart line, and of the chiefs of the northern chivalry, with all their combats in the lists, their meetings on the battle field, their masking and their minstrelsy. In other words, the school in which he formed and prepared himself, was that of the old metrical romances : and, born and educated as he was among scenes of feudal warfare and romantic song, and in the bosom of a people who cherished the memory of gallant deeds and the names of those who achieved them, his song could not well be otherwise. He was come, too, of a warlike race : his maternal ancestor slew in battle one of the princes of England ; and his ancestors in the male line figured in the wars of the Parliament, and one of them was in arms for the Stuarts.

He was born in Edinburgh on the 15th of August, 1771 ; was lame of the right foot from a child, and sickly, and much under the care of his grandmother. In this school of indulgence he grew strong, self-willed, and fond of all pastimes that required boldness as well as invention. His classic lore no one has praised : a love of literature came early on him, with a leaning

to poetry and romance ; and he was distinguished among his schoolfellows for a skill and tact in telling stories of haunted castles and of knightly feuds. When some sixteen years old or so, he had an opportunity of displaying the line of his reading in the presence of Burns, who, fixing his bright black eyes on him, said, "This boy will be heard of yet." He studied the law, but his heart was with the muse ; and it is remarkable, that, though well read in the regular romances, as well as in modern poetry, his first attempt was in ballad verse ; and there is extant a letter from Monk Lewis, proving that even of that simple kind of stanza he could not be called the master. His rhymes were not for the eye, but for the singer, who can drown inharmonious terminations in floods of fine sound. Though there is much vigour and picturesque beauty in some of these early essays, the ballad of 'Glenfinlas' was the first poem which gave evidence of genius. It is, indeed, a masterly composition : it unites the spiritual world with the material, gallantry in arms with lady-love—the image of the North is stamped legibly upon it. Other ballads, scarcely inferior, followed ; and these were gathered into a collection—'The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border,' in which

many of the martial and romantic legends of our ancestors appeared for the first time. This work is distinguished by great knowledge of tradition, history, and poetry. Having secured the national ballads in a fit sanctuary, he turned his thoughts to original and higher matters.

In the year 1805, when the poet was thirty-five years of age, he published 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel,' a poem which has some of the tenderest passages he ever wrote—some most lovely pictures of gentleness and female grace, and scenes full of martial ardour and poetic energy. The story is a little mystical; and though gramery is called in to aid in solving difficult things, there is little done—a knight vanquished, a maiden won, and a castle rescued—but what could have been effected by ordinary means. The spirit of old Scotland, in the days when she had a crown on her head, and glory of her own, is impressed on every page. 'Marmion,' the second great work of the poet, followed: it is a story of Flodden Field, and is filled with adventures of all kinds—contests with spirits, with knights, and with princes; nor is love wanting, though what is pure is too long beset with trouble, and what is successful is not creditable. The charm of the poem

abides with the old Earl of Angus and the Fight of Flodden. All battles, ancient or modern, fade away before it: James sets fire to his tents—descends from the hill, and encounters Surrey amid the smoke—the whole whirlwind of battle, the vicissitudes of a heady and desperate fight, with the personal fortunes of warriors whom we hate or love—are all there. The narrative is vehement and fiery: the world welcomed the work with rapturous applause, and desired more from so gifted a hand.

‘The Lady of the Lake,’ published in 1810, is a romantic story, told in the poet’s happiest way—is full of fine situations, chivalrous feeling, and abounds with incident and character. It is a national epic; has its battles, single combats, and all the varied fortunes of true love. It contained, too, what artists call fine contrasts—the picturesque tartan of the Highlands was opposed to the sober grey of the Lowlands; the semi-barbarous heroism of the mountains, to the polished generosity of the vales. The whole scene recording the adventures of Fitz-James and Roderic Dhu, may be compared with any other passage in poetry, either for life, character, or energy. In his next great poem Scott ventured wholly over the Border, and made a foray on

the English. The tale of 'Rokeby' belongs to the great Civil War; and the scenes where it is laid, and the persons engaged in it, are equally interesting and poetic. It is wholly different from his other fictions, and in some things approaches closer to his great prose romances than aught he has written in verse. There is in the scenery much quiet and reposing beauty, and in the characters much of human nature; but both want the boldness and the picturesque magnificence of 'Marmion' or 'The Lady of the Lake:' yet Bertram Risinghame and the outlaw minstrel are to me more original than any of the Highland chiefs or Border leaders; and it cannot be denied that the landscapes have the softness and fairy-like loveliness of the scenes of the South.

In composing 'Rokeby' the poem of 'The Lord of the Isles' dawned on his fancy. When it was published the world felt disappointed, and said so in plain language—the sale was at first slow, and critics were querulous. It would be difficult to say in what it is inferior to his earlier compositions; there is a national story of high interest, adventures by sea, and moving accidents by land; the eye is kept on the alert, watching the movements of princes, and earls,

and high-born ladies, on whom the fate of a kingdom depends, and the heart is kept beating with that deep interest which we cannot help taking in bravery and beauty. There is the same fire and impetuosity of diction and narrative, and a greater heroic dignity of character than can be found elsewhere in his works. He has explained the cause of the failure himself: "I am decidedly of opinion, that a popular, or what is called a *taking*, title, though well qualified to ensure the publishers against loss, is rather apt to be hazardous than otherwise to the reputation of the author. He who attempts a subject of distinguished popularity, has not the privilege of awakening the enthusiasm of his audience; on the contrary, it is already awakened, and glows, it may be, more ardently than that of the poet himself."

The 'Don Roderick,' 'The Bridal of Triermain,' and 'Harold the Dauntless,' all belong to an inferior range of fiction: they contain many noble and stirring passages, but are unequal, both in conception and execution, to the five splendid romances which preceded them. The main fault of the first of these three works is, the strange long leap which the poet made from the feats of King Roderick to the deeds of

Duke Wellington—olden times mingled ungracefully with latter ; and the narrative seemed a creature with a broken back—the extremities were living, but they wanted a healthy and muscular connexion. The chief faults of the other two poems are, that the scenes and persons belong to days too remote for exciting sympathy ; we scarcely feel an interest in English story till the days of the Norman Conquest. Scott was admonished, by the diminished sale of these works, compared to that of his other productions, that he had already given the world a full feast—

On capon, heron-shew, and crane,
The princely peacock's gilded train,
On tusky boar's head garnished brave,
And cygnet from St. Mary's wave.

Nor was this monotony the sole cause : a new poet had appeared, with such depth of thought, eager abundance of diction, and such wild tales of foreign lands and strange races of people, that he charmed at once the whole land into an auditory. This was Byron : had he preceded Scott, there is no doubt that his bearded Turks and maritime desperadoes, who united one virtue to a thousand crimes, would have given place to the northern chivalry—

All plaided and plumed in their tartan array.

As it was, Byron obtained, for the time, the ascendant; and Scott withdrew from the contest, to raise his banner on another field, and gain honour and glory such as no one save Cervantes can rival.

Scott is a poet truly national and heroic : he finds his scenes in his native land, and his heroes and heroines in British history and tradition. There is an astonishing ease, vehemence, and brightness in his verse ; his poems are a succession of historical figures, with all the well-defined proportions of statues—with this difference, that they act and speak according to the will of the poet. Yet though in external elegance and precision of outline they resemble works of art, they have less of the repose of sculpture about them than any characters in modern song. No one since the days of Homer has sung with such an impetuous and burning breath the muster, the march, the onset, and all the fiery vicissitudes of battle. In his ‘Pibroch’ he has given the very pith and essence of the Highland character, as well as a brilliant picture of manners ; and I cannot better show his large genius in small compass than by quoting that extraordinary song:

Pibroch of Donuil Dhu,
Pibroch of Donuil,
Wake the wild voice anew
Summon Clan Conuil.
Come away, come away,
Hark to the summons;
Come in your war array,
Gentles and commons.

Leave the deer, leave the steer,
Leave nets and barges;
Come in your fighting gear,
Broad-swords and targes.
Leave untended the herd,
The flock without shelter;
Leave the corse uninterr'd,
And the bride at the altar.

Come as the winds come when
Forests are rended;
Come as the waves come when
Navies are stranded.
Faster come, faster come,
Faster and faster;
Chief, vassal, page, and groom,
Tenant and master.

This song is characteristic of all Scott's poetry—action, action, action, is its fault as well as its excellence. Other bards have indulged their heroes and heroines with pastoral retirements and bowers of bliss; and even the devils of Milton enjoy, at times, a sort of uneasy repose. Scott alone keeps them up and doing, till action becomes almost fatiguing, and the reader longs

for pleasant places, where he can sit and ruminate on the perils he has passed, or has yet to encounter. He is one of the most truly national of all our poets.

WORDSWORTH.

OTHER poets than Burns perceived a plan and a law in nature—one great line of sympathy and harmony connecting the dead with the living world, and both with the holy and omnipotent source of light and love. Of these, the most eminent is William Wordsworth. He was born at Cockermouth, in Cumberland, 7th April, 1770; received a classical education, and was destined, I have been told, for the church. His love of poetry, however, appears to have mastered his love for the ministry: in his youth he preferred Parnassus, with all the perils of its thorny ascent, to the quiet garden of the Established Church; and soon proved by his works that the light which led him was light from heaven. His Lyrical Ballads—of themselves sufficiently plain evidence of his notions in poetry—were accompanied by a preface, in which the poet describes the sources of

inspiration, and the leading principles on which he builds the structure of verse. The powers requisite for the production of true poetry are, he says, six-fold : 1. The ability to describe ; an indispensable power, though never employed too long at a time, as its exercise supposes all the higher qualities of the mind to be passive, and subjected to external objects. 2. Sensibility, which, the more exquisite it is, the wider will be the range of the poet's perceptions. 3. Reflection, which makes the poet acquainted with the value of actions, images, thoughts, and feelings. 4. Imagination and Fancy, to modify, create, and associate. 5. Invention, by which characters are composed out of materials supplied by observation. 6. Judgment, to decide how and where, and in what degree, each of these faculties ought to be exerted, and determine the laws and appropriate graces of every mode of composition. From these sources, as from so many fountains, issue the healing waters of verse. "It is deducible," says Wordsworth, "that poems apparently miscellaneous, may with propriety be arranged either with reference to the powers of mind predominant in the production of them, or to the mould in which they are cast, or to the subjects to which they relate. From each of

these considerations the poems have been divided into classes, which, that the work may more obviously correspond with the course of human life, and for the sake of exhibiting in the three requisites of a legitimate whole—a beginning, a middle, and an end—have also been arranged according to an order of time commencing with Childhood, and terminating with Old Age, Death, and Immortality.” As a crowning glory to the whole, and a consummation of his principles, he published his poem of the ‘Excursion’ in the year 1814.

The views of man, nature, and society, which this truly philosophical poem contains, are the offspring of deep thought and extensive observation. It exhibits everywhere the finest sensibilities, and an imagination ruled by reason and belief; it shows a heart alive to all the sympathies of social and domestic life, and appeals to all unsophisticated feelings in a way at once simple and sublime. The poet intimates, in an introduction, the aim and tendency of the whole poem, of which—for the insolence of criticism interposed—one half only is published. The second part gives the sensations of a poet living in retirement;—the author thus speaks of both :

Of Truth, of Grandeur, Beauty, Love, and Hope—
And melancholy Fear subdued by Faith;
Of blessed consolations in distress;
Of moral strength and intellectual power;
Of joy in widest commonalty spread;
Of the individual mind that keeps her own
Inviolable retirement, subject there
To conscience only, and the law supreme
Of that Intelligence which governs all—
I sing. Fit audience let me find, though few.

The poet was not, however, permitted to establish nature, and upset, with impunity,

The truth

O' the elephant and monkey's tooth.

The *Edinburgh Review* was then as a young lion in full majesty of tusk and claw: those who only know it now, when it exhibits the skin stuffed, can have no idea of its early influence with the world. The critics of that dread journal agreed to regard Wordsworth as the chief apostle of a new heresy in verse: it was their opinion, that old opinions were right, new notions erroneous, and that compared to critics, poets and historians were as nothing. They had admonished Scott, regarding his forsaking the broad way of epic song, and presuming, in spite of their admonitions, to incline to the untrodden uplands of romance; and they now assailed

Wordsworth for founding his poetry in his own sensations, and in nature around him. The poets of former ages made the critics; but now the critics desired to be quits, and make the poets: I can come to no other conclusion, from their persisting in the doctrine, that the earlier rules of verse should be adhered to, as if such rules should continue when poetry had received an impress of new and original minds. They might as well have insisted on the old principles of warfare being continued, after the whole combinations and tactics of battle had been changed by the invention of gunpowder. The triumphant exclamation of "This will never do," with which the northern journal began its critique on 'The Excursion,' is sufficient example of the tone of insolence which those writers assumed. It had, however, its effect at the time, and stopped, as I have related, the publication of the second portion of the poem, nor is there any hopes of seeing it, we fear, till the poet has joined the Miltons and Spensers of the brightest days of British song.

Wordsworth is the poet of nature and man—not of humble life, as some have said—but of noble emotions, lofty feelings, and whatever tends to exalt man and elevate him on the table land of honour, morality, and religion. His style is

worthy of his topics—simple, unaffected, and vigorous: he occasionally becomes too minute in his delineations, and some of the subjects which he treats of, are too homely for inspiration. His poetry is making its way, as true feeling and impassioned thought ever will. He dwells at Rydal, in Westmorland: holds a situation in the Stamp Office: is conscious of the value of his musings; eloquent in conversation, and one whom, having met once, we would wish to meet again.

SOUTHEY.

THERE are poets whose genius is not confined to verse, but who, after reaching almost the summit of Parnassus, descend and travel into the wide domains of history, and gain a name in the cause of truth, rivalling their fame in fiction. Robert Southey is of these, and one of the most distinguished. He was born in the parish of Christ Church, Bristol, in the year 1774: his parents were of such substance as to be able to give him an excellent education: he was some time in Westminster School, where he gained a name for being both stirring in play

and quick in his lessons: what he acquired in Westminster, he took with him to the University: but he did not remain long there. He gave in his adhesion to the muses early, and courted public notice in a succession of poems of an epic stamp, which raised him high in the ranks of inspiration. 'Joan of Arc' was written before he was twenty-one years old: the preface is dated November, 1795: in all the history of our poetry, we have no poem of that high order—containing such truly heroic and deeply pathetic passages, written by one so youthful. In those days—when the bard was young and ardent, and before reflection and the world had sobered down his notions, he was smitten with the theories of the revolutionists of France, and rejoiced in their promises of equality in all matters save genius. In this he went hand in hand with almost all the nation, for who did not rejoice to see a doting tyranny trampled to dust, and a hope of liberty held out for enslaved millions? But soon after he published his first epic, Southey beheld the Goddess of Freedom metamorphosed into the Demon of Conquest, and the citizens of France marching to the subjugation of free states, with a chief whose war-cry was universal dominion. The poet turned

from the French—not from freedom—and lent his aid to his own land, then menaced by the “Friends of the People,” with right good-will. This very natural line of conduct has raised a hue and cry of political heresy against him, which is often renewed. Byron was one of the bitterest of his foes; and has left traces of this unamiable spirit in too many places of his works.

To the ‘Joan of Arc,’ succeeded ‘Thalaba,’ an Arabian poem, with much of the wonderful and wild, but more of the natural and heroic; the introduction—more brief than common with Southey—is dated Cintra, October, 1800. The irregular measure in which it is written, he looks on as the Arabesque ornament of an Arabian tale, and says truly, that the dullest reader cannot distort it into discord. It is, indeed, musical :

How beautiful is Night!
A dewy freshness fills the silent air:
No mist obscures, nor cloud, nor speck, nor stain,
Breaks the serene of heaven :
In full orb'd glory, yonder moon divine
Rolls through the dark blue depths ;
Beneath her steady ray
The desert circle spreads,
Like the round ocean girdled with the sky.
How beautiful is Night!

The poem relates the fortunes of the heroic orphan Thalaba, who, by the aid of virtue, and love, and courage, triumphs over spiritual as well as material enemies. It is a moving story—for, of all our poets, Southey has the truest pathos.

‘Madoc,’ which appeared in 1805, is a poem founded on a Welsh tradition, that in the twelfth century one of the Princes of Wales led a band of adventurers in search of a more hospitable land than their own, and formed a settlement in America. “Strong evidence,” says the poet, “has been adduced, that he reached America, and that his posterity exist there to this day, on the southern branches of the Missouri.” That the country has since been explored, and no Welsh Indians found, makes nothing against the beauty of the poem. The narrative is in blank verse, “the noblest measure,” says the poet in the preface to Thalaba, “in my judgment, of which our admirable language is capable.” Of this fine measure, he has here and elsewhere shown himself a great master. To the regular ‘Madoc,’ succeeded the wilder ‘Kehama,’ a tale of the Hindoos; emblazoning the superstitious beliefs, and im-

pulses, and feelings, and manners of that singular people. It was printed, I think, in the year 1809 ; the story relates the triumph of the powerful and wicked, through the means of a prayer and a curse, over the beautiful and the pure, till time and penance remove the charm, and truth and virtue prevail. The measure is irregular—sometimes with and without rhyme ; but always harmonious and pleasing to the ear : nor are the attractions of fancy and sensibility wanting. The character of young Nealinay, and the detail of her sufferings, are full of tenderness and pathos—of gentleness and the exquisite simplicity of nature. It is altogether a magnificent fiction, and though its machinery and manners were strange to the public ear, it was well received, and went through various editions.

With ‘Roderick the Last of the Goths,’ Southey resolved, it seems, to bid farewell to national and historic fiction ; it is the last of his greater poems ; and though not in matters of fancy and imagination the highest, is considered, and I think justly, not only as the most touching of his productions, but the most affecting and heroic poem of modern times. It has the pathos of sentiment and of situation, and is

written in vigorous and massive blank verse, and in such manly and racy English, as few bards of these our latter days can approach. Of this, the flight of Roderick may serve as a specimen of what is impressed on every page of the poem:—

From the throng
He turned aside, unable to endure
This burthen of the general woe : nor walls,
Nor towers, nor mountain fastnesses he sought :
A firmer hold his spirit yearn'd to find,
A rock of surer strength. Unknowing where,
Straight through the wild he hastened all the day,
And with unslackened speed was travelling still,
When evening gathered round. Seven days from morn
Till night he travelled thus : the forest oaks,
The fig-grove by the fearful husbandman
Forsaken to the spoiler : and the vines,
Where fox and household dog together now
Fed on the vintage, gave him food : the hand
Of heaven was on him, and the agony
Which wrought within, supplied a strength beyond
The natural force of man.

Roderick escaped, in the poet's song, from the fatal field in which he lost his crown to the Moors; sought, by a life of mortification and repentance, to appease offended Heaven, and finally appeared as a stranger warrior in the ranks of his own army, turned the tide of battle by his valour, and having saved the country he had injured, departed, and was seen no more.

In the minor poems of Southey there is great and various merit; some are of joyous, others of a satiric nature: the former have tender passages amid their mirth, and the latter are discerning and sarcastic, wear an air of simplicity and sincerity, and pass the objects of their invective or their scorn under the “saws and harrows of iron,” with such readiness and force as rank the author high among the sons of satiric song.

Southey has the great merit of being original in his conceptions, in his subjects, and in the structure of his verse; he is ever equable, clear and flowing—has matter always ready, imagery at command, and so earnest and possessed with his theme, as never, for a moment, to cease to interest us. His thoughts are generally just and noble; he is a lover of mercy, an admirer of whatever is generous and heroic. His poems have survived the sternest and most unmitigated criticism; against him, as against Wordsworth, critics bent their sharpest shafts, and, for a time, appeared to daunt, disconcert and oppress him; because his song was unlike that of other men, he was treated with all this contumely; his fault was his merit; had he sung as others have done, he might have sung pleasingly and

with effect: but he gave way to his own emotions, and, at the risk of critical martyrdom, established himself as an original, who copied but from his own heart and conceptions. His life has been laborious and exemplary; he is one of our most fruitful and successful writers; his biographies and histories are considered by many superior to his poems; his mind overflows with all kinds of knowledge. He lives at Keswick, in as retired a way as his high fame will allow, and few travellers of any taste visit the Lakes without desiring to see the poet of Thalaba, the biographer of Nelson, or the historian of Brazil.

MONTGOMERY.

To write the life of James Montgomery would be to compose something like a romance. He was born at Irvine, in Ayrshire, 4th November, 1771; his father, a Moravian preacher, removed him, at the age of four years, to Antrim, in Ireland; he remained there for a year, and was then transferred to the Moravian seminary at Fulnick, in Yorkshire, to be educated, whilst his father and mother sailed to the West Indies

for the purpose of instructing the negroes of Barbadoes. His parents perished in this venturous mission, and the young poet was nurtured and instructed by the good and generous Moravians. The state in which he was kept was not a little monastic: for ten years he was secluded from the world: but the result was admirable scholarship—and, what the brethren little perhaps expected, a resolution to be a poet. At ten years of age he was a writer of verses; at fourteen he had filled two volumes with his attempts, and the Moravian brotherhood concluding that out of such materials it was in vain to try to make a missionary, had him articulated first to one tradesman, then to another; the young poet either disliked business or restraint, and, having grown up almost to manhood, resolved to seek something for himself. He accordingly, in the year 1792, associated himself with the editor of the Sheffield Register, a journal vehement in the cause of public freedom; a clergyman wrote a song in honour of the fall of the Bastile: Montgomery boldly printed it, and in 1795 was fined twenty pounds and imprisoned for three months in York Castle. On his release he wrote an account of a riot in Sheffield, in which two men

were killed; an indictment for a libel was the consequence; he was fined thirty pounds and sent for six months to prison. The magistrate at whose instigation he was prosecuted, relented afterwards of his conduct, and sought, by kindness and public attention, to efface all remembrance of his sufferings.

He was, however, so little affected by the rigour of a jail, that he wrote what he called 'Prison Amusements'—a series of poems, sometimes light and airy, and occasionally serious and mournful—they were published in 1797. The retired leisure of Scarborough afforded him an opportunity of composing 'The Ocean,' a poem; this was in 1805, and in 1806 the injuries of Switzerland inspired him with the idea of giving a picture of the misery to which a Swiss family were driven by the fraternal affection of the French. The poem is of a dramatic character, and exhibits both ardour and sensibility, though the measure is the worst that could be chosen for tenderness or emotion. 'The West Indies' followed; the poem was published in a most expensive form, and such was the demand, that ten thousand copies were sold. In the year 1812, he wrote 'The World before the Flood;' though the time was remote,

the country welcomed the poem warmly; nor was 'Greenland,' a poem which gave an account of the Moravian missions to that land of frost and snow, overlooked, though a fragment; his last extensive poem was 'The Pelican Island,' in nine cantos, suggested by a passage in the voyage of Captain Flinders to New Holland. One of his most popular works is called 'Songs of Zion,' or, in other words, versions of the Psalms of David. The verse is generally easy and harmonious, but in simplicity and graphic truth our ancient versions are not approached. The merits of Montgomery as a poet must be gathered from the approbation of the world, and not from the opinion of the *Edinburgh Review*. His thoughts are pure and elevated, his diction fluent and harmonious; he maintains an equal flight, never high, never low; he is calm, but not impetuous; has much tenderness, but no ecstasy. In person he is above the middle height, with looks composed and melancholy; he is widely esteemed, and is in his nature friendly and obliging.

GRAHAME.

THE poem of 'The Sabbath' will long endear the name of James Grahame to all who love the due observance of Sunday, and are acquainted with the devout thoughts and poetic feeling which it inspires. Nor will he be remembered for this alone; his 'British Georgics' and his 'Birds of Scotland,' rank with those productions whose images and sentiments take silent possession of the mind, and abide there when more startling and obtrusive things are forgotten. There is a quiet natural ease about all his descriptions; a light and shade both of landscape and character in all his pictures, and a truth and beauty which prove that he copied from his own emotions, and painted with the aid of his own eyes, without looking, as Dryden said, through the spectacles of books. To his fervent piety as well as poetic spirit the public has borne testimony, by purchasing many copies of his works. 'The Birds of Scotland' is a fine series of pictures, giving the form, the plumage, the haunts, and habits of each individual bird, with a graphic fidelity rivalling the labours of

Wilson. His drama of 'Mary Stuart' wants that passionate and happy vigour which the stage requires; some of his songs are natural and elegant; his 'Sabbath Walks,' 'Biblical Pictures,' and 'Rural Calendar,' are all alike remarkable for accuracy of description and an original turn of thought. He was born at Glasgow, 22nd April, 1765; his father, who was a writer, educated him for the bar, but he showed an early leaning to the Muses, and such a love of truth and honour as hindered him from accepting briefs which were likely to lead him out of the paths of equity and justice. His 'Sabbath' was written and published in secret, and he had the pleasure of finding the lady whom he had married among its warmest admirers; nor did her admiration lessen when she discovered the author. His health declined; he accepted the living of Sedgemore, near Durham, and performed his duties eloquently and well till within a short time of his death, which took place 14th September, 1814.

HOGG.

THE rustic school of Scottish poetry was established by kings: James the First, with his 'Christ's Kirk on the Green,' and James the Fifth, with the witty rustic grace of his ballads, gave a tone and character to our spontaneous verse which has been well supported by Ramsay, Ferguson, and Tannahill, and extended and exalted by the impassioned energy and vigorous intellect of Burns. James Hogg, or the Ettrick Shepherd, as he loves to call himself, is acknowledged on all hands to be the living and visible head of this national school of song; his genius seems the natural offspring of the pastoral hills and dales of the Border; and its speculations, whether in verse or prose, come to us in the way that gold comes from the mine, unwinnowed and unrefined, for he is without higher education than what enables him to write his wayward fancies, and read them when he has done.

He was born on the 25th of January, 1772, thirteen years after the birth of Burns; nor was his appearance on the birth-day of the great

poet the only circumstance which marked that something remarkable was given to the world; a midwife was wanted, and a timid rider was sent for her, who was afraid to cross the flooded Ettrick: his hesitation was perceived by an elfin spirit—the kindly Brownie of Bodsbeck, who unhorsed the tardy rustic, carried home the midwife with the rapidity of a rocket, and gave a wild shout when the new-born poet was shown to the anxious parents. A child thus ushered into the world could not well be otherwise than something more than common; but it, perhaps, was not considered by his father and mother in any better light than a visitation of Providence, when they discovered, as he grew up, that his vocation was poetry, and that all these romantic circumstances had but marked that another victim was added to the melancholy catalogue of martyrs in the cause of the Muse. He learned to read with difficulty; acquired a slight knowledge of penmanship in a quarter's schooling; was taught how to watch lambs on the mountains, smear sheep, and play on the fiddle. His parents were poor and humble, and could educate him no farther. As he grew up, he began to instruct himself; but, above all, it was his pleasure to make long bal-

lads, and sing them on the hill-sides to all who were willing to listen; it was more easy to make rhymes than commit them to paper; he, however, mastered this, and having done, thought of having them printed. This he accomplished during a journey to Edinburgh with a flock of lambs; and, save the song of 'Donald Macdonald,' which had made its appearance, the first work which the Shepherd gave to the world was 'Willie and Katie,' a plain, rough-spun pastoral, with some finer touches in it to mark that better was coming.

Having made the acquaintanceship of Sir Walter Scott, and acquired some confidence in his growing powers from the approbation with which his verses were received in the Scottish periodicals, he wrote a series of ballads, and published them by subscription, under the name of 'The Mountain Bard.' Several of these compositions were of great merit: 'Gilmanscleuh' has much tenderness and simplicity and the wild tale of 'Willie Wilkin' aspires to rank with the 'Glenfinlas' of Scott. The description of the spectre horses, is surpassed by nothing in ballad verse. The hero of the story went to a meeting of warlocks, witches, and evil spirits, held in an old churchyard at midnight; his

mother, a devout woman, followed, and was astonished at finding her son's horse standing in a rank of gigantic coursers, among which he seemed but as a foal. She stretched her hands out to stroke their mighty sides, and perceived, to her horror, that they were spectral, for every wave that she gave her arms, a gap was left behind.—There were, however, some of the ballads not equal to this, and they were moreover deformed with a homeliness of language, which might be tolerated in the minstrels, but not endured in modern song.

Hogg acquired money and made friends by these speculations, and was emboldened to take a farm ; but the star of Burns found him out : he did not succeed, and, what was worse, when he sought employment as a shepherd, no one would employ a man who, besides the misfortune of failing as a pastoral farmer, was afflicted with the incurable malady of poetry. What could he do ? He wrapped his plaid about him, took a staff in his hand, and marched boldly into Edinburgh, as Burns did before him, resolved to be a poet, and seek his bread by it, since no better might be. He found many obstacles, and though Scott was kind, and Wilson friendly, Constable refused to smile, and the

Shepherd bard was compelled to try his fortune by starting a [new periodical, which appeared under the name of ‘The Spy.’ This proved an unfortunate undertaking; the sale was low, and had just reached the remunerating point, when some of the city spirits took fright at sundry rude unpruned expressions of the hills, and, withdrawing their subscriptions, stopped the publication. All this while, however, Hogg had been secretly at work, and when many were imagining he would be silenced for ever, surprised his friends and charmed the country by publishing ‘The Queen’s Wake.’ Those who the day before had shunned him, now sought his friendship; the titled and the beautiful were not slow in admiring; even some of the joyous citizens of Edinburgh saluted him across the street with homely greetings such as these: “What for have ye been pestering us with daft sangs and dafter essays, and had such a noble poem as this in your head? It has taken a night’s-sleep from me—it’ll do, I’ll warrant it—else nought will do.”

The poem is unequal, and it could not well be otherwise; it consists of the songs of many minstrels in honour of Queen Mary, united together by a sort of recitative, very rambling,

amusing and characteristic. Some of the strains of the contending Bards are of the highest order, both of conception and execution; the Abbot of Eye has great ease, vigour, and harmony, and the story of the Fair Kilmeny, for true simplicity, exquisite loveliness, and graceful and original fancy, cannot be matched in the whole compass of British song. A new vein of superstitious feeling is opened. So truly poetic and yet so justly natural is the whole narrative, that even the surliest critic—and such was not wanting—could fix on no blemish, and all ordinary readers acknowledged it to be at once elegant, moral and impressive, and in harmony with superstitious belief. There are other songs scarcely inferior to these, and of a totally different sort. I allude particularly to the Witch of Fife, a ballad of singular humour and fancy, but perhaps not quite so original. Such a poem soon wrought its way in public esteem; when it had reached a third edition, the Edinburgh reviewers sent forth a critique upon it, acknowledging its general merits, and speaking with kindness of the author. But the patronizing air of the review could not be otherwise than offensive to a man of independent feeling, who was seeking fame and not alms.

Other poems soon made their appearance from the same hand: 'The Pilgrims of the Sun,' a wild tale, and sufficiently poetical; 'The Poetic Mirror,' in which Hogg, under pretence of editing a series of poems by the chiefs of the living bards, has imitated their styles with considerable ability; 'Mador of the Moor,' in five cantos, containing much of the wild and the wonderful; and finally, 'Queen Hinde,' a poem about a princess of Scotland's elder day, when the Danes filled our firths with navies and our land with fears. The first of his larger poems was published in 1813, the last in 1825, but none of them, though all containing passages of feeling and fancy, and exhibiting a glowing and fluent diction, equalled 'The Queen's Wake,' which had stories for all hearts, and a variety wonderfully attractive. These, however, by no means make up the amount of Hogg's productions; he wrote a succession of prose romances and tales, which entitle him to a separate consideration and place among the novelists of his day; and he sent to the world many short poems and songs; some of the latter of great pastoral beauty, simplicity, and truth. There is a warmth, a sincerity, and a sweetness of fancy in his lyrics, which will long preserve them among

the mountains, and now and then procure them applause in the city, when affectation and smartness yield to the emotions of the heart.

Hogg is what he represents himself, a shepherd. He was so when I first met him on Queensberry, with his plaid around him, his dogs beside him, and his heart full of kindness and poetry. He lives on the Yarrow, on a sheep farm bestowed on him by the munificent Duke of Buccleuch; he finds fish in the stream, lambs on the braes, game on the hills, and leads a life of quiet independence, free from the din of aught less musical than the murmur of the brooks. As a poet he stands high; in energy of expression and passionate ecstasy he is much inferior to Burns; but he is second to no one in natural flights of a free and unfettered fancy. The peculiar qualities of his compositions, and being the chief of the Peasant school, whose students are not at all numerous, give him every chance of fame hereafter. He stands by the force of his genius alone, and holds all but the highest place in a literature, which more than approaches that of the polished and the learned.

COLERIDGE.

THERE are poets whose fame has arisen as much from a sense entertained of their genius as from the charms of their productions. To this class belongs Samuel Taylor Coleridge. His poems are various and unequal : sometimes vigorous and soaring ; often tender and moral ; frequently gentle, insinuating and persuasive, and studded all over with fine thoughts, expressed in a brief clear way. There are passages, too, of great boldness, and gushings out of a singular and whimsical fancy. On his incomparable ‘Genevieve’ he has lavished all the melting graces of poetry and chivalry ; in his ‘Ancient Mariner’ he has sailed, and in his ‘Christabel’ flown, to the very limits of invention and belief ; and in his chaunt of ‘Fire, Famine, and Slaughter,’ he has revived the vehement strains of the sibyls, or rather furies, and given us a song worthy of the prime agents of perdition. These poems are of first-rate excellence, each after its kind ; it is true that ‘Christabel’ is a fragment, and so peculiarly wild in conception, that it startles even poetic-

mind critics; but it overflows with poetry; there are indications in it of a higher reach than the author has elsewhere ventured upon, and a vein of superstition runs through the whole, bestowing a wild supernatural grandeur upon it, which is in harmony with popular belief. The poet seems either to have exhausted his invention, or else felt conscious that he had flown too high in the regions of fancy for ordinary minds to follow him, for he stops in his aerial tour, closes the page, and refuses to make any further revelation. He seems to have had in his mind the romance of Merlin, a monkish fiction, and a fine one, but difficult to deal with in these matter-of-fact days. 'The Ancient Mariner' arises out of feelings common to our nature, and contains a lesson, and a wondrous one, on our kindness to the dumb but living creation around us. The Mariner wantonly shoots an albatross, reckoned a bird of good omen with sailors, and is punished, with all his crew, for his cruelty. The singular way in which this is told, and the superhuman adventures of the seamen and their ship, render this ballad both daring and original.

His translation of 'Wallenstein,' I have heard commended, by good judges, as superior to the

drama whose language it professes to speak; and his 'Remorse,' though a play for the closet rather than the stage, has passages full of passion and fire. In prose his powers are not at all equal; he is occasionally, indeed, graphic and lively, as when he gives an account of his voyage; often dramatic, as in the description of his success as a preacher of lay sermons; but he is too frequently obscure and mystical.

He was born in the year 1773; was educated at Christ's Hospital, where he reached the rank of Grecian, and distinguished himself by his eloquence; he soon made himself known as a poet; married one of the sisters of Mrs. Southey; wrote political articles in a newspaper; delivered lectures on poetry; and published his collected works, in two beautiful volumes. He now resides near London, sees company on the Friday evenings, and sends away all strangers charmed with the eloquence of his conversation. He has written nothing of late: as his fame will be settled by his best poems, he is as sure of future reputation as any poet of this age.

LEYDEN.

THE ‘Scenes of Infancy,’ ‘The Mermaid,’ and ‘The Court of Keeldar,’ will long attest the genius of which we were too early bereaved in the death of John Leyden. He was born of humble parents, near Ancram, in the year 1775; distinguished himself at school, not only by the facility with which he learned every task, but by a sort of impetuous enthusiasm which soon sought vent in song, and procured him the notice and friendship of Scott, then his near neighbour. He contributed the two fine ballads to which I have alluded, to the Minstrelsy of the Border; for fancy, fluency, and beauty, they may be compared with the best of Scott’s, though inferior in truth of manners, and in true old ballad fire. The ‘Scenes of Infancy’ have many picturesque passages, and record the traditions, and delineate the landscapes of pleasant Teviotdale, with equal feeling and truth; original nerve is wanting where it cannot well be dispensed with, and the work may be accused of lulling us with sweet sounds, more than elevating us with bright brief bursts of natural

emotion. The miseries to which a poet, who had to trust solely for support to song, was likely to be reduced, were present to the mind of Lord Minto, when, without solicitation, he offered Leyden a situation in the East Indies ; this was accepted with rapture—for the poet could do nothing in a common way—and parting with Scott, not without tears, he sailed for his new land of promise. Sir John Malcolm has related with what assiduity Leyden set about the acquisition of the native languages, and the extraordinary ardour with which he discharged his duties. His fine genius promised to open to us the literary treasures of Persia and Hindostan, and much was looked for by all who knew him, when, in 1811, he had to unite himself to the expedition dispatched against Batavia, and fell a victim to fatigue and the wear and tear of an over-ardent mind, and a severe climate. I never heard Scott name Leyden but with an expression of regard and a moistening eye.

LAMB.

CRITICS are said to have checked some poetic spirits, and if this be true of any, it is of Charles

Lamb, who was handled so rudely by the critics of the *Edinburgh Review*, that he forsook the Muses, and, directing his mind to prose, acquired a reputation, under the name of Elia, not destined soon to die or be forgotten. There is, nevertheless, much quaint feeling in his verses; he has used the style of the good old days of Elizabeth in giving form and utterance to his own emotions; and, though often unelevated and prosaic, every line is informed with thought, or with some vagrant impulse of fancy. He was born in 1755, and educated in the school of Christ's Hospital, where he was the companion of Coleridge, and distinguished for a quick apprehension and a facility in acquiring knowledge. In his earlier days he became acquainted with Southey and Wordsworth, which induced some critic, more ingenious than discerning, to number him as a follower of what is erroneously called the Lake School. The tone and impulse of the Lakers are all of our own times; the hue and impress of Lamb's verse is of another age: they are of the country, he is of the town: they treat of the affections of unsophisticated life; he gives portraits of men whose manners have undergone a city-change; records sentiments which are the true offspring

of the mart and the custom-house, and attunes his measure to the harmony of other matters than musical breezes and melodious brooks. His prose essays, and sketches of men and manners, are in a bolder and happier spirit; there is a quaint vigour of language, a fanciful acuteness of observation, and such true humanities and noble sensibilities sparkling everywhere, as rank him among the most original critics of the age. Nor is he otherwise in company than he is on paper—his wit is unwearied, and his gentleness of heart ever uppermost, save when he chooses to be sarcastic, and then he soothes whomever he offends, by some happy and un-hoped for compliment,

CAMPBELL.

THE nerve and impulse of the new school, and the polish and elegance of the old, unite in Thomas Campbell. He is of the west of Scotland, the son of a second marriage, and was born at Glasgow in 1777, when his father was seventy years of age. He went to school early, and wrote verses almost as soon as he mastered the use of his pen; at college he carried away

all the prizes he contended for, much to the delight of his mother, who had become a widow, and rejoiced in the success of her only son. Having distinguished himself as a Greek scholar, where Greek is said not to abound, he obtained the situation of tutor in a family in Argyleshire. We soon afterwards find him in Edinburgh, where he was countenanced by Dr. Anderson, and had acquired celebrity as a poet through ‘The Dirge of Wallace,’ and other shorter pieces handed about in manuscript. He was not more than twenty, I believe, when he published ‘The Pleasures of Hope’—a poem which he shakes his head at now, but which, nevertheless, exhibits high imagination, deep sensibility, a clear eye for the picturesque, and a burning thirst for freedom, with a noble scorn for all that is sordid and slavish. His next effort was ‘Lochiel and the Wizard,’ with ‘O’Connor’s Child:’ the first is heroic and high-souled, the latter tender and affecting. There is a grand flow in the versification of the first; a hurrying march of words, and such an infusion of northern sentiment and manners as made it welcome through all the heathy dominions of the Gael. The ‘Gertrude of Wyoming’ is the poet’s own favourite, and he is certainly right in his affection:

there is a quiet grace, a melancholy beauty—a sort of Niobe-like suffering and sad repose about it, which open every heart, and moisten every eye. If it wants the fervour of ‘Lochiel,’ and even of some places of ‘The Pleasures of Hope,’ it abounds more with what is lastingly impressive—images of domestic gladness and scenes of retired love. His ‘Theodric,’ published in 1824, shares largely in the same beauties, though less happy and natural in its delineations.

His martial lyrics have much passionate energy, united to regularity and classic elegance; a concise vigour, a glowing rapidity of words, and such liquid harmony of versification, as make them more than a match for all kindred compositions, save the ‘Bruce’s Address’ of Burns, and the ‘Donuil Dhu’ of Scott. They have, likewise, a tenderness which softens the rigours of war, and calls upon us, amid the earthquake voice of victory, to sympathize with the fortunes of the vanquished or the fallen: I allude to the concluding verses of ‘Hohenlinden’ and ‘The Battle of the Baltic;’ all who read this will be at no loss to remember similar passages, connecting the sternest scenes with the gentler sympathies of life. He has not limited his

studies to poetry: some ten years or more ago he published *Specimens of the British Poets*, accompanied with dissertations on their merits; the selections were, in general, judicious, and such as showed the peculiar talents of the writers; and the criticisms were distinguished for taste, liberality, and acuteness. He undertook a *Life of Sir Thomas Lawrence*, and dropped it after writing a score of pages: he now promises a memoir of Mrs. Siddons. He has almost given up his allegiance to the muse; but now and then verses worthy of his palmier days drop from his pen. Poland has monopolized his affections of late, and he lives in the hope of seeing a crown on her head, and Nicholas driven back to his deserts.

Campbell is of middle stature, well made, with a quick eye and a quick temper. He has been accused of absence of mind, but never of unkindness of heart. He was made Lord Rector of Glasgow by the free impulse of the youth of the West;—it was a deep snow when he reached the College Green, the students were drawn up in parties, pelting one another; the poet ran into the ranks, threw several snowballs with unerring aim; then, summoning the scholars around him in the hall, delivered a

speech replete with philosophy and eloquence—it is needless to say how this was welcomed.

MOORE.

WITH all her eloquence, feeling, and fancy, Ireland contributes little—at least, less than she ought—to the imaginative literature of the empire: for what she pleases to send we are thankful—the quality is good. She has, at present, one representative at the court of Parnassus—I mean Thomas Moore. Of his personal history I know but little, of his works much. He was born in Dublin, in May, 1780; and having, both by wit in conversation; and genius in verse, made himself known early, was admitted at once to the society of the courtly and the noble. The first thing I heard of him was, that he was the companion of our young nobles and the guest of the Prince of Wales; the second was, that he was the author of *Tom Little's Poems*—in which, amid much wit and fancy, there is a colouring of licentiousness. For this he was so sternly rebuked by the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, that a hostile meeting was the consequence; with the upshot I have

no further knowledge, than that the poet and critic both survived, and became intimate friends. His next work was more worthy of his talents —this was the Songs of Ireland : they appeared in successive numbers, and their object was, to give to the finest of the Irish airs words of corresponding sentiment, and of a national character. In this he has not always succeeded : there is a liquid ease, a dance of words, and a lyrical grace and brevity in them all ; but there is, likewise, an epigrammatic point and smartness, a courtly and a knowing air, so to speak, alien to the simplicity of the music and to the nature of song. It is true they give us much of the sparkle and the gaiety, and the complimentary mood of polite company, and have no rustic Corydons or milkmaid Phillises, or sentiments which savour of the sheep-fold and smell of tar. In one word, there is not a little affectation in them, put-on graces, and artificial raptures. These faults are nearly balanced by beauties : there are innumerable bursts of true feeling ; sallies of lofty indignation against the enemies of his country, deep sympathy with her woes, fine glancings back to days of traditionary splendour, and a bright hope for the future —in which, I trust, he is a true prophet. In

true love, too, he has written much that is gentle and persuasive; he has pictured tenderly the soft intercourse of pure and innocent hearts, and given affection a tongue eloquent and pathetic.

His 'Lalla Rookh' is an Eastern story: "a succession of songs of varied beauty, united by prosaic bonds," in the words of a critic in the tale, who, speaking with the decision of Jeffrey, pronounces judgment on the strains as the youthful minstrel utters them, and is neither complimentary nor sparing. The shining deeds, the sparkling diamonds, the lustrous rubies, the odorous gums, and the sweet-smelling flowers, with which the whole work is bestrewn, call up the sneering mirth and the withering denunciations of this self-elected judge; and it must be confessed, that he who mimics Jeffrey stumbles sometimes upon such sharp and sagacious things as belong to the strictures of his prototype. His remorse and contrition, when he discovers, to his mortification, that he has been criticising a true prince instead of a peasant minstrel, was suggested, it is supposed, by the change which came over the mood of the *Edinburgh Review* when it discovered that Byron was a Whig. The poem has been circulated over the world,

and Moore's name is known in the uttermost ends of the earth. His satiric poems are keen and cutting—a sort of poetic nitric acid. When the Prince of Wales became Regent, he new-modelled his household, and turned a cold shoulder on many of his early companions: Moore was a sufferer, it is said, and resented it in a series of crucifying poems, which are not only popular now, but promise to continue so. In person the poet is small, dresses smartly, has a lively and bustling air, and is kind and obliging.

WILSON.

THE west of Scotland, as I have shown, produced Burns, Grahame, and Campbell; I have now to add a fourth—John Wilson. He is a native of Paisley, and was born in May, 1789. The affluent circumstances of his father enabled him to have the benefit of a classic education; he obtained the rudiments of his learning in Glasgow, and went from thence to Oxford, where he obtained prizes in his college: one of them was an essay, in verse, ‘On the Merits of Ancient Sculpture—’ there is a flow of words

and the dawning of pure taste. He courted public attention, first, in his poem of 'The Isle of Palms : ' it exhibits scenes of enchanting beauty, a prodigality of loveliness united to uncommon sweetness and tranquil grace. 'The City of the Plague' succeeded: a noble and deeply pathetic poem—a picture of London, suffering under the calamity which laid her streets and squares desolate. It possesses great dramatic interest, and displays picture after picture of private suffering and public misery: the darkness is relieved by such flashes of light as few bards have at command; in the abodes of despair there are rays of hope let in—on the brink of the grave flowers of beauty are scattered; nor do we tread the floor of the charnel-house but in joy mingled with fear. His most dolorous scenes are redeemed back to our sympathy by inimitable touches of nature; and we rise from the spell of perusal sobered and elevated.

His poetical powers are very varied: that is, he can handle any subject in its own peculiar spirit. His 'Edith and Nora' is one of those fairy-fictions of which he once promised a volume; there is a wondrous beauty shed over the landscape on which he brings out his spiritual

folk to sport and play, and do good deeds to men : nor has he wasted all his sweetness on the not insensible earth ; he has endowed his fairies with charms from a hundred traditions, assigned them poetic and moral tasks, and poured inspiration into their speech. Another fine poem of his is ‘ An Address to a Wild Deer :’ for bounding elasticity of language, hurrying thoughts, and crowding imagery, it is without a parallel. Indeed, throughout all his smaller poems there is a deep feeling for nature ; an intimate knowledge of the workings of the heart, and a liquid fluency of language almost lyrical. He is distinguished, in all his compositions, for splendour of imagination, for loftiness of thought, for sympathy with all that is grand or honourable in man, for transitions surprising and unexpected, but never forced, and for situations such as appear to an eye which sees through all nature. He may be accused sometimes of an overflow of enthusiasm about his subject ; nor has he escaped from the charge of sometimes overflowing sentiments with words. In person he is the noblest looking of all our poets : in company he is free, companionable, and eloquent ; never hesitates to do a good deed to a deserving person, or give the young and the meritorious a lift on

the road to fame. He is a foe to all affectation, either in dress or verse, and mauls the fop of the toilet and the fop in poetry with equal wit and mercilessness.

KIRKE WHITE.

Most poets are of God's making, but some are, nevertheless, manufactured by man—to both we are indebted for Henry Kirke White. The story of his fortunes, his early aspirations, his desire of fame, his attempts in song, his seeking for a patron, and finding a harsh critic, his doubts in religion, the solution of those doubts, together with his merits as a man and a poet, are related by Robert Southey in a manner so artless and so moving, as would bring fame to one much less worthy than Kirke White. He was born in 1785, and died before he reached manhood: his poetry is pleasing, and his subjects are moral; he is tender and touching, and seldom wants thoughts, and never lacks language; but there is an absence of energy and originality: he is truly sincere, yet seldom fervent. His life has its lesson, and his early death its moral—let all young poets read and tremble.

BLOOMFIELD.

AT the head of the rustic school of poetry in England, stands Robert Bloomfield: he was born in 1766, taught to read and write, then apprenticed to a shoemaker, in whose service a love of verse came on him, the first fruits of which were 'The Farmer's Boy,' a poem which has not been untruly described as the gleanings of Thomson. This brought him patrons and public favour: he quitted his humble trade, commenced bard by profession, and produced many poems, all distinguished, like 'The Farmer's Boy,' for sweet and graceful pictures of life and nature. He has much truth and little force—clever detail, but no commanding features; has been called the English Burns, but, save in the sad humility of their fortunes, there is no more resemblance than between a canal and a torrent. With all the patronage he received, and in spite of the numerous editions of his works, he died in want, and found no one to relieve him. He was a modest and amiable man.

BYRON.

THE cynical, sneering, and sarcastic spirit of our times—the doubting of everything, and believing in nothing—found a poet in George Gordon Lord Byron. He was born with the noblest faculties: his imagination was boundless, his intellect lofty and vigorous, his application unceasing: nor did he want a passionate energy, and a sensibility keen and acute—in short, a union of those fine qualities which fit a man for the highest flights of poetry. How and when much of this was blighted and seared, will perhaps never be discovered: of the sterner and darker parts of his character, there is no intimation in his first publication, the ‘Hours of Idleness,’ and the change which came over him, as a cloud comes over the sun, has been imputed to the contemptuous and unjust criticism in the *Edinburgh Review*, which nearly drove him distracted—turned his blood to gall, and dipped his pen in nitric acid, and influenced all his future compositions. This is not easily reconciled with the circumstance mentioned by Moore, that a good deal of his satire on the re-

viewers was written before the critique alluded to appeared : I know not how it came to pass, but it is certain, that from this period Byron became cynical and moody, and recalled, too often for his own peace of mind, the language of the article, which he continued long to resent.

His high birth and singular story united in helping him on to fame. He was born in London in 1788 : his father was a spendthrift and a libertine, and his mother an heiress, who paid, as a penalty for her ill-placed love, her whole fortune, save some two hundred a year, on which this descendant of princes educated her only child, and maintained her household. Between the poet and a lordship many life-like people stood ; but by the time he had half completed his education, relations were removed one by one, till at last the title descended to him, and he found himself lord of Newstead, and of himself—"that heritage of woe." Like Burns, whom in many things he resembled, with him began love and poetry : when some twenty years old, he gathered his poems into a volume—the source of all his fame, and much of his sorrow : in reply to its reception from the critics of the north, wrote that sharp satire, 'English Bards

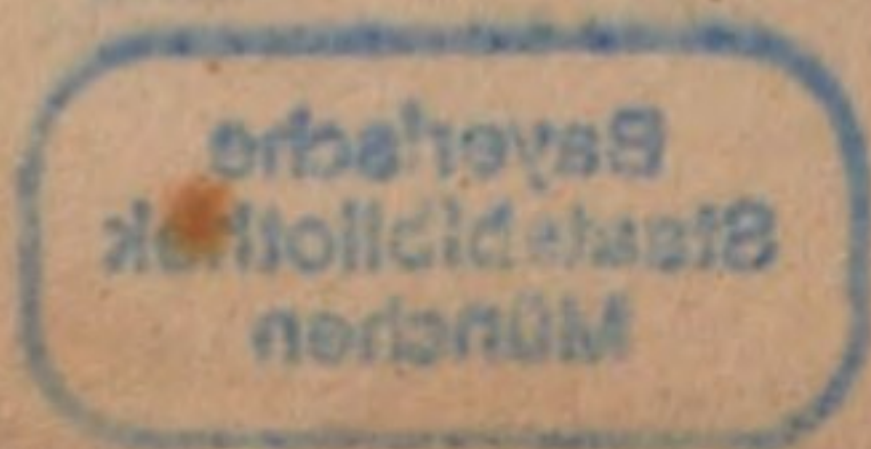
and Scotch Reviewers,' and having done so, sailed away, to give his wrath a cooling on Mount Parnassus and in the Hellespont. He was beginning to be forgotten, when he returned suddenly to England, surprised the country by the publication of 'Childe Harold,' and his whig reviewers, by siding with them in the Lords, and uttering biting speeches against the Tories. This noble poem raised him at once above criticism, and gave him rank with the highest spirits of English poesie.

From this time forward, he continued to pour his verse before the public, with a rapidity only equalled by the originality of his conceptions, and the brightness of his handling. A succession of poems, all impressed with an eastern character, and wearing the hue and lineament of the people with whom he had sojourned among the Mediterranean isles, confounded the critics, and awakened such rapturous applause as had only been heard when the Ariosto of Scotland sent forth his 'Marmion,' and 'Lady of the Lake.' Of these, 'The Giaour,' 'The Corsair,' 'The Siege of Corinth,' 'The Bride of Abydos,' and 'Lara,' appeared within a wondrous short space of time; which proves that the poet's passions, like those of another bard, raged

like so many devils, till they got vent in verse. Having wearied himself rather than the public with rhyme, he took a sudden stride into the realms of blank verse, and gave us his mysterious 'Manfred,' his splendid prodigal 'Sardanapalus,' with other dramatic compositions scarcely less regal and surprising. Having on many occasions displayed an irritability of nature, and a quick susceptibility in all things personal, together with a love of showing that he was inflammable and voluptuous, his friends, in the joy with which mariners welcome a storm-tossed ship to a secure and calm anchorage, hailed his marriage with a lady reckoned every way worthy of her envied fortune. The result was unfortunate; from the moment of his marriage his muse was silent: his creditors were not so: three executions in this proud man's house invaded his studies and hurt his temper: his lady, under pretence of a journey to the country, forsook him: the world, always ready to strike the proud, and trample on the famous, assailed him with its thousand weapons, and drove him in a moment of despair from the land which gave him birth, and now inherits his glory. His course from this moment was wayward, and more like a will-o'-wisp than an in-

spired being : yet, between this and the grave, he wrote some of his boldest compositions ; he concluded ‘Childe Harold,’ wrote ‘Mazeppa,’ and alarmed the sedate and the scrupulous with his wild ‘Don Juan.’ The poet seems to have been sitting between angels of light and darkness when he wrote it, and to have been influenced by the former at the rate of ten stanzas to the canto. It exhibits some of his brightest and some of his blackest moods. How he tried to restore the extinguished fire of liberty in Italy, and, with a helmet of a Spartan pattern on his head, sailed to revive heroism among the hordes of Greece—how he failed, and how he fell, have been made known to the world. He died at Missolonghi, and was buried at Newstead, after being refused admission into Westminster Abbey.

The poetry of Byron is singularly bold in conception : the thoughts are generally new and striking, and the language audaciously powerful and fluent. He looks at nature through his own eyes : he refuses to feel with others ; and this is visible in the characters he employs, as well as in thoughts on the present and the future, which he scatters always with a daring and sometimes with a profane prodigality. He has



no desire to claim the virtues of mercy and generosity for his bandit heroes ; he dips them in the hues of darkness, and then seeks to bring them back towards humanity, by shedding on them one ray or so of virtue, which, like a light in a charnel-house, renders all more ghastly around. His heroines are neither feminine nor natural : they seem formed on the Nut Brown Maid pattern, whom neither robbery, bloodshed, nor love elsewhere bestowed, could appal. This is an offence against the feeling and pride of woman's heart, which all the other charms in which he arrays, or the grandeur of soul with which he sometimes endows them, cannot atone for. Yet, with all the repulsiveness of his men, and the melo-dramatic sort of characters of his women, he invests them with such life—paints their thoughts so truly, and their actions with such wondrous force of light and shade, as render them welcome, with all their sins against virtue and decorum. His chief excellence is in the calm dissection of the human heart, and in expressing sentiments dark and terrible. We follow him, not through the charm of love, but the spell of fear ; and while we cannot find an echo in our own hearts for a third of the fearful things he utters, we follow

him still. His radical defect is a want of sympathy with universal nature : in this, the peasant Burns far surpasses the lordly Byron : the humble tiller of the ground, who had but the sweat of his brow and seven pounds a year for his inheritance, loved the earth and all that was in it, ten times more than did the Lord of Newstead, with his high rental, and pedigree reaching to the Conquest. The noble poet did not see and feel great Nature's plan, as the rustic felt it : he wrote of everything as if in scorn ; he treated virtue as an accident, and error as a certainty ; and his fame must pay the penalty of his pride or his presumption. We read his noblest strains with an uneasy heart and a troubled brow : those who desire to draw the honey of happiness from divine verse, will not readily obtain it in the works of the gifted Byron.

SHELLEY.

PERCY Bysshe Shelley, one of the most inspired and unfortunate of modern poets, claimed descent from a family of old standing in England : he was born in the year 1792 ; acquired

all knowledge on which he set his heart with great readiness, and would have finished his education in Oxford, had he not been obliged to retire from college, because of the freedom of his religious speculations. He had before this given proofs of regard for the Muse, and was become known for the ardour of his verse, as well as for its mysticism. On quitting college, he married a young woman, of whose beauty he was enamoured : his love was unfortunate : she died early, not without suspicion of having suffered from a broken heart ; and whatever sorrow Shelley felt at her death, was not lessened by the rigour of the law, which deprived him of the society of his children, because he believed not all that the church believed. This aided in filling his mind with gloom and resentment. He carried his feeling into his poetry, and in ‘ The Revolt of Islam,’ and ‘ Prometheus Unbound,’ stories which some resolve not to understand, assailed all old and established things, whether of faith or government, and called loudly for reformation and change. His admirers, in these mystic strains, perceived a high and godlike philosophy ; others saw a design to overturn church and state : nor were men wanting who called the poet mad, and his verses nonsense ;

but the bulk of mankind agreed that the poems were rapt, fiery, and energetic. As a poet, however, he is in nearly all things too shadowy and mystical: his 'Prometheus Unbound,' for instance, is a magnificent riddle. His 'Cenci,' however, comes from nature; and some of his smaller poems have a concise beauty and an antique grace about them, such as have seldom appeared since the time of Milton. He perished in a storm on the coast of Italy, and his body was burned, and the ashes placed in an urn. He was an accomplished gentleman—had great grandeur of imagination—a fine sensibility: was not without humour, and abounded in pathos, such as sinks at once to the heart.

KEATS.

OF John Keats no memoir has been written—which is mentioned to the reproach of good friends and gifted ones, who survive him. He was a native of London, and was born in 1796: he received a good education, and when young, chose the profession of a surgeon, which induced critics to reproach him with walking the hospitals. He gave early indications of court-

ing the muse, and when under twenty, published a singular poem called 'Endymion,' which his admirers describe as filled with noble fancies, and dreamy and delightful. His 'Hyperion' and other works are less mystical; but they have all more or less of the obscure and the dark, save a remarkably fine fragment, called 'The Eve of St. Agnes,' founded on an inland tradition, which says, he that dares to stand at the church-yard gate on that eve, will see all the individuals who are in the following year to die, come trooping to the burial ground, in the order in which they will be buried. The Editor of the *Quarterly Review* happened to be looking out for a victim, when the works of Keats appeared: the stern son of Crispin forgot the arts which caused himself to rise, and, what was worse, overlooked the manifold beauties of the poems—he saw nothing but folly and fine words. To such a review, there was no other mode of reply but a horsewhip or a brace of pistols; and Keats had courage fit for anything: but long before the review appeared, a consumption had begun to sap the functions of life, and the young poet had, in the homely but expressive phrase, "taken death to him." A warmer climate was recommended, and he went to Italy; but the

sunshine and balmy air of that land, which continues health to the slavish and the undeserving, wrought no change in Keats : he drooped and died, and was buried in the stranger's ground, as consecrated earth must not be polluted with the dust of a heretic.

WILLIAM LISLE BOWLES

HAS been long and favourably known by his sonnets and short poems : they possess a quiet beauty, an easy elegance, and a truth of sentiment, which keep hold of the heart. He was one of the chief combatants in the late Pope controversy, in which all who engaged had the singular merit of being wrong : poetry is found in art, as well as in nature, by those who have any wish to find it.

WILLIAM SOTHEBY

MADE us his debtors, by giving an English dress to 'The Oberon' of Wieland : a poem which caught the fancy and employed the pencil of Flaxman. He has lately helped us to a portion

of Homer, which seems more accurate than Pope, and less graphic than Cowper; he has merit too as an original writer.

WILLIAM CARY

Is best known to the world through his incomparable translation of Dante: some of his versions of the French minor poets might be a model to all who desire to translate a poet in the spirit of his times—they are easy, fluent, and simple. He is one of the first scholars and worthiest men of the age, and for a small salary, which even Hume would desire to enlarge, takes a subordinate charge of books in the British Museum.

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

THE deep-mouthed Bœotian of the satire of Byron, is known to the lovers of song, by his ‘Gebir Count Julian:’ a work less read than it deserves, for it contains passages of peculiar force and no ordinary beauty.

HENRY HART MILMAN.

His genius inclines to the dramatic: yet, in his regular poems, amid much elaborate splendour, there are scenes of natural emotion, touching pathos and manly sentiment. His ‘Samor, Lord of the Bright City,’ is a British tale of a day too remote for modern sympathy; and the story of ‘Belshazzar’ is familiar to all who know the Scriptures, and excites little hope in the reader—for what dare a poet do more than inspired men have already done?

WILLIAM TENNANT,

In his very original poem of ‘Anster Fair,’ gave Frere and Byron more than a hint for ‘Whistlecraft’ and ‘Beppo’: nor is it unjust to say, that the imitators have not at all equalled the life, the naïveté, the ludicrous dashed with the solemn, and the witty with both, which characterize the poet of Dollor.

LEIGH HUNT

HAS scarcely obtained such fame as his talents deserve. His 'Rimini,' though not without affectation, has high merit, both in conception of character, and conduct of story; there is a singular ease and richness of expression, a quick sensibility and a ready feeling for beauty, both of nature and life; he drops in, now and then, as if by accident, a homely but expressive phrase, which awakens many fine associations. His prose is gossiping, graceful, and searching, and charms many readers.

BRYAN WALLER PROCTOR,

BETTER known as BARRY CORNWALL, has taken a strong hold of the public heart by his fine dramatic scenes, and, latterly, by his very varied and exquisite lyrics. In the former he revived the grace and natural emotion of the older dramatists; the 'Lysander and Ione' has wonderful sweetness of sentiment and fancy. His prose is simple in its construction, and has much of knowledge and nature.

THOMAS HOOD

Is, perhaps, better known to the world as a dextrous punster than as a true poet; in his 'Little Odes to Great Folks,' he dallied with words till he made them wanton, and, by the force of a peculiar fancy, compelled the language to bear the burthen of meanings alien to its nature. Yet no one could read these sprightly and laughable things without perceiving the spirit of a true poet; his 'Dream of Eugene Aram,' places him high among the bards who deal in dark and fearful things, and intimate rather than express deeds which men shudder to hear named. Some others of his poems have much tenderness, and a sense of nature animate and inanimate; but he has left the company of the serious Muse for the society of her with the light foot and the merry eye—and the world has smiled on his choice.

WILLIAM MOTHERWELL.

WHEN Aaron's rod sprang out and budded,
those who saw it could not marvel more at the

dry timber producing leaf and bloom, than we did when Motherwell, an acute and fastidious antiquarian, appeared as a poet, original and vigorous. His lyrics are forceful and flowing—with more of the strength of Burns than of his simplicity and passion.

ALEXANDER ALARIC WATTS

Is distinguished among poets for sweetness of versification, tenderness of sentiment, with occasional bursts of true emotion. He has taste in art as well as in literature. He has wit too, and humour, and bitterness, and lately exercised them at the expense of sundry of his brethren.

THOMAS PRINGLE

Is a poet and philanthropist; in poetry he has shown a feeling for the romantic and the lovely, and in philanthropy he has laboured to introduce liberty, knowledge, and religion, in the room of slavery and ignorance.

WILLIAM KENNEDY,

THE author of 'Fitful Fancies,' and 'The Arrow and the Rose,' has fancy and feeling, nor is he without sudden bursts of manly vigour; but he is unequal in execution, and occasionally overstrained in language.

ROBERT MONTGOMERY

Is a poet at once devout and satirical. He has been sternly censured and highly praised; his chief fault lies in choosing topics too holy and heavy for human handling, and his chief merit is fluency of language and moral fervour of thought.

ALFRED TENNISON

HAS a happy fancy; his originality of thought is sometimes deformed by oddity of language; and his subject has not unfrequently to bear the weight of sentiments which spring not naturally from it. He has lyrical ease and vigour,

and is looked upon by sundry critics as the chief living hope of the Muse.

EBENEZER ELLIOT

HAS sung of that public grievance, the Corn Laws, with the bitter energy of a man famishing on the highways. He heaps up images of scorn and loathing till he approaches the sublime. There is much truth amidst his satire, and many moving passages mingled with his invectives. But when the price of corn falls, the fame of the poet will fall in proportion, for such is the penalty paid for pouring out fancy and feeling and sarcasm on fleeting matters. He has, however, other chances of reputation; some of his pictures of domestic life are graphic and forceful; he has inherited not a little of the power of Crabbe—and, like Crabbe too, he sees the dark side of all things, and comes to the peasantry of his country, like the priest in Burns, with tidings not of hope, but damnation.

GEORGE DARLEY

Is a true poet and excellent mathematician: there is much compact and graceful poetry in his 'May Queen;' and, in 'The Olympian Revels,' a dramatic freedom and fervour too seldom seen in song.

There are other bards of these our latter times, who have sung well and found listeners, and who deserve a place even in a brief account like this: Croly, and Clare, and Moir, and Malcolm, ought not to be forgotten, when the labours of the Muse are mentioned; and others, also; but I have already said too much about the sons of song; besides, a weariness of soul has come upon me, for I have not been insensible of a gradual descent from the commanding heights of genius on which I took up my subject. I must not, however, close accounts with poetry without introducing some of those female spirits who sing with energy as well as grace, and hang the garlands of their fancy on the highest altars of the Muse.

JOANNA BAILLIE.

“SISTER JOANNA,” as Walter Scott loved to call her, is a poetess of a high order; she is at once vigorous and gentle, sarcastic and moving, homely and heroic. Her genius is of the dramatic kind, and her ‘Plays on the Passions’ display such variety of powers as have obtained her the name of the Female Shakspeare. Her regular poems abound in noble sentiments, and her songs have all the life, humour, and simplicity of the early Scottish lyrics. In conversation she is shrewd, lively, and agreeable, and her looks are full of genius. I have never seen either a bust or a portrait of her, and this is the more to be lamented, since she stands not only at the head of female writers, but takes precedence of many of the “lords of the creation,” both in quickness of imagination and massive grandeur of thought.

FELICIA HEMANS

Is the authoress of many a plaintive and mournful strain. She has shown high sentiment and heroic feelings occasionally, but her affections are with the gentle, the meek, and the wounded in spirit. It ought to be remembered, that in the strife of song she vanquished all the male professors who entered the lists. Some one who desired to do a good deed to the Muse, offered fifty pounds for the best poem on the memorable conference which ensued between Wallace and Bruce, after the fatal fight of Falkirk. There were many competitors; the Muse, with the waywardness of her sex, refused her effectual aid to any save Felicia, and enabled her to carry away the money and the fame. Her genius is of the domestic kind, and her best songs are rightly named of the "Affections."

LÆTITIA ELIZABETH LANDON

Is, next to "Sister Joanna," the most successful poetess of our day. She is the L. E. L. of many a pretty poem: nor has she sung only a tender ditty or two, and then shut her lips to listen to the applause they brought; she has written much; sometimes loftily, sometimes touchingly, and always fluently and gracefully. She excels in short and neat things; yet she has poured out her fancy and her feelings through the evolutions of a continuous narrative and intricate story. The flow of her language is remarkable; her fancy is ever ready and never extravagant. Her chief works are 'The Improvisatrice,' and 'The Venetian Bracelet;' nor has she hesitated to try her hand in prose also, and in a long story: 'Romance and Reality' displays ready wit, much sprightliness, and an extensive acquaintance with the world. She is young; pleasing, too, in company, and lively without effort.

MARY HOWITT

HAS shown herself mistress of every string of the minstrel lyre, save that which sounds of broil and bloodshed. There is more of the old ballad simplicity in her compositions than can be found in the strains of any living poet besides; her language is vigorous, but not swelling; and always subordinate to the sentiments, whether of tenderness or of love.

On looking at the splendid and varied poetical productions of the last fifty years, and comparing them with the works of the first great era of British song, I cannot help perceiving a falling off. We have, it is true, fewer learned allusions; less classical copyism; nor is our verse swelling with gods and goddesses; Venus and Cupid no longer manage the affairs of love; but we have less noble emotion, lower flights of fancy, and little rejoicing in nature's joy; the Muse refuses to skip like a roe on the mountains, but is inclined to be moody and discontented; she sings in a strain sneering and dolorous; she is sensible, in fact, of the low estate of the in-

spired, and refuses to be comforted. The love of song has suffered of late a sad abatement; many circumstances have combined to harm it; criticism has something of this to answer for; the deluge of verse poured on the land during the last thirty years, has had its influence, together with the calculating and mathematical turn which the public mind has taken. All this will pass away, and natural emotion will resume its power : though it is winter with the Muses now, the season of flowers and song is at hand.

BRITISH NOVELS AND ROMANCES.

THE imaginative prose literature of our own times has taken the form and character of the Novel and the Romance, and, in some respects, approaches closer to poetry and history than the prose fictions of our forefathers : it is more ambitious in its aim, wider in its range, more startling in its combinations, and more poetic in its conceptions. The novelist invades the province of the epic poet and dramatist, and discusses topics which the muse contemplates with fear, and in which the tragic bard dreads the taste of the galleries. He takes the same liberty with the materials of history ; and it has been our luck to see, in our own day, a second Shakspeare delight a second Marlborough with splendid passages from history, brightened all over with the sunshine of poetic and dramatic invention. Fielding, and Smollett, and Richardson contented themselves with delineating the domestic manners, individual characters and passions of

social life; and though Smollett, particularly, more than approached the poetic, none of them touched the historic, or presumed to colour the waters of truth with the hues of fiction. For this change there are several reasons: 1, the vein of domestic fiction was nearly exhausted; 2, poetry had at last almost ceased to attract; 3, a great genius arose, who by a series of bright creations led the herd of novelists and writers of all kinds to fresh pastures, and awakened a desire in the public for that kind of pleasing reading. From whatever cause the change arose, it is certain that a poet was soon at the head of it, bestowing all the colours of the Muse on the historic or higher portions, and continuing the dramatic details, conversations, adventures, and incidents peculiar to humble life, which distinguished preceding novelists.

To Sir Walter Scott this change has been ascribed: and, unquestionably, if he did not originate it, he gave it a poetic form and pressure, reduced it to a clear and consistent system, and crowned it with that glory which has made it the wonder of Christendom. 'The Castle of Otranto' brought in the Gothic picturesque; Mrs. Radcliffe added Gothic horror and superstitious dread; and, in short, from a variety of

sources, the impulses were given, and the materials supplied, from which arose the present splendid superstructure of fiction. The new form of Romance is said to be more true to nature—it is, at all events, according to the manners and taste of the age; the legends which we now regard as deforming the pages of our elder historians, were, in those days, fully received and accredited as truths; and it may happen, that, as superstitious dread and fear are part of our nature, in some future age the desire of the present, to discredit the existence of spiritual intercourse and influences, may be spoken of with commiseration and sorrow. Be that as it may, in compliance with taste and increase of knowledge, all intercourse with the invisible world was relinquished by the romantic writer, though in doing so he crushed the informing soul out of his conceptions—for the wild, the wonderful, and the supernatural, are the blood, bone, and sinews of romantic writing. This was felt by authors; and, from a wish to compromise the matter with public taste, and yet have all the benefit of the superstition, they introduced a spurious progeny of spirits, whose appearance and acts were, like the tricks of legerdemain, satisfactorily ac-

counted for to the reader, while the victims of belief were allowed to wander in the dark in dread and fear. This kept the external shape of the superstition before our sight, but it did no more : we laughed in our minds at the fantastic tricks which spirits of sticks and straw—ghosts of shreds and patches—caused poor be-devilled men to make ; and we looked upon all efforts of this kind as a better sort of practical jokes. The effect, it is true, is the same on the person to whom the mechanical hobgoblin appears—not so to any other person : his eyes are shut to the cheat, the eyes of others are opened. When the Evil Genius of Brutus appeared to him, or the spirit of “buried Denmark” stood before Hamlet, the effect would have indeed been the same to them, had those terrible visitors been artificial machines, or men dressed up in the costume of spirits, like the monk in salmon skins, who came, as the Son of God, to King James at Linlithgow : but what would have been the effect on us ? We should have laughed at the dexterity of the cheat, and the noble Roman and majestic Dane would have been lessened in our eyes, and looked upon as little better than dolts. It is not necessary to trace the leading features of our romance literature

further; it will be made sufficiently manifest in the characters which follow of the chief works and chief writers of this popular sort of composition.

ANNE RADCLIFFE

MAY be placed at the head of what is called the horrible and awful, and considered as too frightful to be described. Others showed us the light burning on the closed sepulchre—she opened it, and introduced us to the perfumed bodies, rotting in their shrouds, and looking on us in red-heeled slippers and lack-lustre eyes, like the mummied wife of Van Butchell in Surgeon's Hall. We had been threatened with trap-doors, shaking tapestries, subterranean passages, and chambers of dool and dread, by other romancers; but it remained for Mistress Anne to put the threats of her forerunners in execution: she produced a rusty key of a gothic pattern, undid the unwilling doors, and led us shuddering through the terrific domains of superstitious dread and fear. Nor was this all: the shapes which haunted our dreams she turned into spectres, glaring upon us in the glimpses of

the moon ; and on our imaginings she bestowed form and look, and gave them utterance such as made our bones to shake, and “each particular hair to stand on end.” And yet all this was done, as the puritan said God was worshipped when the organ played—by means of machinery : the shapes which made us shudder were of our own framing, and the sounds which made the cold sweat stand on our brows were common sounds after all. The enchantress had prepared us for this. Fuseli pampered himself on pork chops, when he desired to limn his evil spirits and nightmares—the dainties of the painter were but another name for the jarring doors, glimmering lamps, tottering turrets, veiled figures, mysterious whisperings, and ten thousand other dark, dim, and unexplained things, which united to make one of her scenes a vale of terror and of the shadow of death.

It required a high imagination and fine descriptive power to do all this, and Mrs. Radcliffe had both in an eminent degree. Her narratives are very graphic and exceedingly fascinating : she is never at a loss, all is clear and consistent ; horror the second follows horror the first, as Abram begot Isaac, and Isaac Jacob ; the cloud, at first of the size of a man’s hand, darkens and

expands till it fills the landscape. In delineating her fantastic conceptions she had a Rembrandt sort of skill in light and shade, which communicates an effect to her descriptions, in strict keeping with the characters and events which are introduced. There is a fascination in her 'Mysteries of Udolpho,' which those who feel in youth will likely remember in old age : but it is not the fascination of pleasure ; it resembles that practised by the adder, when it sucks, as rustic naturalists say, the lark from the sky—we shudder and become victims. The earth, as we read, seems a churchyard—the houses become castles of gloom—the streams run as if with blood—the last note of the blackbird seems that of the last trumpet—"disasters veil the moon"—and Anne Radcliffe and her mysteries triumph. But all this, though impressive, and sometimes grand, is unnatural ; such fictions could not last—they were not of God, and so they failed. The authoress lived long enough to see the fabric which she had reared melt away, and Nature resume her reign with the same ease and quietness that the moon succeeds the tempest.

She was the leader of those who superseded the true supernatural by means of the false su-

pernatural, and wrought her wonders by aid of mystical machinery. In 'The Castle of Otranto' and 'The Old English Baron,' the images of terror are all truly gothic, and in strict accordance with belief; in Mrs. Radcliffe they are all of the mechanical school, and though they affect us before we discover of what they are composed, that feeling passes away, never to return, for we cannot fear them again. We read on, and at last discover, that our travels in the vale of superstition—like the ascent of Sancho Panza into the region of fire—were all imaginary; that we had taken a horned cow for a fiend, the voice of running water for a voice from the grave, and that the shank bones and skulls amid which our feet had crunched were but stubble. We are offended with ourselves for being so imposed on; we have a contempt for the very victims who were "frightened with false fire;" and we extend not a little of our ill-will to the writer who took such pains to put us out of humour with ourselves.

LEWIS.

‘THE MONK’ is of the same race of wild creations : all is forced and exaggerated ; men and women are exhibited under a light which both distorts and discolours—human nature has not fair play for a moment : yet there is great force—not of passion, but of posture, and great vigour of colouring—not of nature, but of artifice. This melo-dramatic sort of representation of life startled for a time, but could not last : when truth and true passion took the field, the fictions of Lewis were of the same avail as the false rods of the prophets in the presence of the true rod of Moses.

WILIAM GODWIN

Is the Anne Radcliffe of moral order and social law : in his dissections of the human heart he resorts to the same sort of picturesque tricks which the other employs to create supernatural impulses. He refuses to allow nature to have justice—he puts her into a strait-jacket ; he sits

down, after mature study, takes a false view of man and his passions, and upon this raises a stupendous and toppling superstructure, which wants nothing but a good foundation to be permanent. His reasoning is right, but then it is from wrong principles: legs were made for stockings, says Voltaire, sarcastically—therefore we wear stockings, says Godwin, seriously. This applies to all his works: ‘Caleb Williams’ is the cream of his mind, the rest are the skimmed milk; yet in that wondrous novel all must be offended with the unnatural and improbable character of Falkland: the most accomplished, the most heroical and lofty-minded of men murders one who had affronted him, allows others to be hanged for the deed, and persecutes to the brink of ruin a man whose sole sin was a desire to penetrate through the mystery in which this prodigy of vice and virtue had wrapped himself. Williams suffers, merely because it was necessary for the story that he should; a single word would have set all right, and saved him from much unnatural terror. In short, the fault is, that the actions which the dramatis personæ perform are not in keeping with their characters. It is impossible for Godwin to write anything without exhibiting great ability, great

knowledge of human nature, and an art, all his own, of tracing impulses and emotions. But it is, at the same time, a painful task to the feelings to read what he writes: we are let into secrets of villany and crime, which cannot pass through our hearts without leaving, as the snail does on the flower, a track behind. His *St. Leon* and his *Mandeville* are ten degrees darker than his *Falkland*: in the latter, there are many ties to connect us with truth and nature, and we go on—as the sailors keep by a sinking vessel—in the hope that all must be righted soon.

Mandeville is one of those unhappy persons whose minds are never so free from the storm of passion as to be fully rational, and yet cannot, save in fits of fury, be considered wholly mad. All mankind, he thinks, have conspired against him, and he commits strange deeds, nor hesitates at crimes, to protect himself against this visionary combination. The delineation of the character is admirable, the conception striking, the language forcible; and we only lament that all this should be lavished on such a fantastic and unnatural monster. Other novelists desire to instruct or amuse us; and though they frequently delineate deeds which are painful to

contemplate, and introduce us to characters both base and fiendish, yet on the whole they raise our love of human nature; at all events, we quit them with no increase of dislike to our species, nor think the worse of human nature for the trials to which it has been exposed without always triumphing. With no such feeling does Godwin go to work: it seems his desire to put us out of temper with our species by putting us out of sympathy with their actions; he wishes to induce us, like Job, to curse the day of our birth, the hour in which a man-child was conceived. He will not for a moment permit us to indulge in the belief that honesty and candour exist on the earth: a surgeon dissects to teach—Godwin mangles to expose; we rise from the perusal of his works, marvelling at his powers, but sorrowing for the sad use he has made of them; and we speedily seek, in other works, to forget his splendid but unnatural creations.

MADAME D'ARBLAY,

IN her 'Evelina,' 'Cecilia,' 'Camilla,' and other productions, connects us with the times of

Dr. Johnson, and leads us back to the days when a more studied sort of language, and less natural freedom of expression characterized our romantic literature. In her 'Evelina' she pleased Johnson—who was not readily pleased—so much, that he loved to allude to her work in company; and, to the mortification of Boswell, called him a Brangton, after a rude and forward family in the novel. Her power in individual portraiture is great—the Brangtons are admirable. Mr. Smith represents a citizen of credit and renown. Her perception of singularity of character is quick and keen, and she fastens on an absurdity with a hearty relish. She paints outward circumstances—the external form and pressure of things, and gives manners and actions with wonderful precision and force. In her 'Memoirs of Dr. Burney,' she has taken a sitting of Boswell, which exhibits thrice as much of the man as Sir Joshua's portrait does; and, in her letters to Mr. Crisp, she has shown quick powers of observation, and unequalled ability in delineating the ways of the world around. Of those "who gave the ball or paid the visit last," she knows everything, and detects errors against the etiquette of fashion or the stately ways of court life, with an eye which

shows she made such conventional decorums and elaborate courtesies her study and her pleasure.

Her works are deficient in original vigour of conception, and her characters in depth and nature. She has considered so anxiously the figured silks and tamboured muslins which flutter about society, that she has made the throbbings of the hearts which they cover a secondary consideration. She paints the punctilios and peccadillos of polished life; she is great in artificial good-breeding; and would rather allow one of her heroines to stain her reputation than soil her kid gloves. All that is rustic is to be shunned—all that is rude abhorred; a word out of joint with the settled language of high life, forfeits caste, and cannot be retrieved—and a lady had better be found in an equivocal situation than make an equivocal speech. Catherine of Russia excelled in this: her court in act was the most licentious in Europe—in speech the most pure. No doubt the fault lies in society rather than in Madame D'Arblay: she paints what she sees, and she paints it vividly; she ought, however, to have shut her eyes on those elegant affectations, and opened them wide upon unsophisticated life: fashion passes away, and

the manners of the great are unstable, but natural emotion belongs to immortality.

ELIZABETH HAMILTON,

LIKE Madame D'Arblay, paints the passing wants, the fleeting manners and changing condition of social life; but then her pictures are taken from the shepherd's hut and the husbandman's hovel, and, amid much that is now past and gone, show not a little of a fixed and permanent nature. She is the monitress of the clouted shoe: she felt offended with the carelessness and the sloth of the dames and maidens of Scotland, and commenced brightening their walls, sweeping their floors, polishing their furniture, and setting their homes in order, in a manner that will be long remembered. While in the act of bestowing upon them the blessings of

A cozie ingle and a clean hearth-stane,

she lectured them on the merits of activity and cleanliness with a sharp and eager tongue. Amid much truth in her domestic pictures, there is an inclination to overcharge and caricature.

In her 'Cottagers of Glenburnie' she has collected the faults and failings of a dozen counties, and called the scene a sketch from life and nature; but it is no more Scotland, than a picture of Wapping would be London. Nor did she consider sufficiently the social condition of the humble daughters of the cottage in her day: their lot was one of unmitigated toil—far from the baker's shop, the butcher's stall, and all the conveniences of life seen in towns and cities, they had to run, and collect, and drudge, like the laborious Brownies of their own traditions. The traveller for whom the Highland dame prepared a cake, saw more during the hour in which he waited than Mrs. Hamilton saw in all her life. The wife of Glenmore went to the field, reaped the barley, brought it home, thrashed it, ground it in a handmill, baked it, and served it up with whiskey, all in one short hour. Women, constantly employed in toils, which machinery or men's hands perform in other countries, must not be charged with sloth. Their condition is now changing; and the daughters of Caledonia are, with leisure on their hands, become as fastidious and sensitive in matters of housewifery as a Mrs. Hamilton could desire.

HENRY MACKENZIE.

THE polished elegance and graceful pathos of HENRY MACKENZIE made his name widely known; he is a master in the neat, the pretty, and the beautiful; he knows how to prepare and arrange his materials so as to waste nothing; he sets all in a proper light; as he has just enough, and no more, to complete his undertaking, he cannot afford to be prodigal of his treasures, and is compelled to exhibit his sentiments and his incidents like flowers at a show. He has, perhaps, written some of the most touching little stories in the language; 'Louisa Venoni' is one of those sweet and natural things which no one forgets, and could not if they would: all is simple, and eloquent, and sad. His 'Man of Feeling' is the offspring of the Sentimental Journey and Werter schools; it is better regulated than the first, and less frantic than the second; the hero is possessed with a passion which he has too much modesty to utter, and dies of true love and decline when all wish him to live. The scene in the madhouse should be learned by heart. The accumulation of woes in 'Julia de Roubigné'

makes it too melancholy to read; it is more like a revelation made in confession than a fine work of fancy and feeling; it is not a difficult thing to heap woe on woe. 'The Man of the World' proved that Mackenzie's genius had not strength for three volumes, but belonged to short romances and brief tales, where one action suffices, and one train of sentiment is sufficient. He was a person of fine taste, had some poetic feeling and fancy, and amused himself in his youth with penning ballads in the manner of the old minstrels; he was also a kind and generous man; he did more to make Burns known than any dozen of the high and the influential, and he took that position for him among men of genius which the general applause of the world has since most satisfactorily sanctioned.

MISS FERRIER.

OF Miss Ferrier's talents for observation of life, and skill in delineating the passions, follies, and virtues of human nature, her novels of 'Marriage' and 'Inheritance' sufficiently testify. Were other assurance necessary, it might readily be found; Scott, in the conclusion to his 'Le-

gend of Montrose,' bids farewell to his readers in these words : " I retire from the field, conscious there remains behind not only a large harvest, but labourers capable of gathering it in. More than one writer has already displayed talents of this description, and if the present author, himself a phantom, may be permitted to distinguish a brother, or perhaps a sister, shadow, he would mention, in particular, the author of the very lively work entitled ' Marriage.' " To a warm heart, a lively fancy, and great powers of discrimination, Miss Ferrier has added variety of knowledge, and a graphic art of describing all she sees, and all she feels, which give her a distinguished place among the novelists of the day.

MARIA EDGEWORTH

Is the most eminent of our female novelists in all that concerns the condition of society, the ways of life, and the influence of education and birth, and whatever darkens or brightens the landscape of social existence. She has no desire to give studied pictures, and work up the light and shade of the scene till our wonder is di-

rected to the hand that wrought the laborious enchantment, rather than to the sentiment of the painting; her brush seems ever full, her canvas ever ready, and she dashes in the sad realities of life, with a vigour and truth to which every heart responds. Nothing can surpass the intrepid fidelity of her delineations: nor does she seek only to make vivid impressions: she has an aim in all she does: she brings a healing consolation and hope for the social sorrows of her unhappy country, and seeks to regulate the will-o'-wisp movements, and direct the mind and hand of bewildered Ireland. In doing this she has not cut, like an unskilful surgeon, into the heart of the patient; she is gentle and affectionate, and, while filling the mind with knowledge, and guiding the feet in the right path, she enjoys all the mother-wit, unstudied humour, joyous whims, and capricious follies for which the children of the Green Isle are remarkable. She has been charged with want of a moral; by want of a moral the critic meant the absence of that Summary and Application which are commonly appended to tales which have less claim to be ranked with works of moral instruction than those of Miss Edgeworth; in truth, a moral enlivens and informs the whole

of her narrative, as sap runs up the stem and along the boughs of the tree; the reader cannot help feeling and applying it as he goes along. It may be instanced as a proof of the fine understanding and original vigour of mind of this eminent woman, that she refused to avail herself of all the ready-made machinery of the novel and the romance; she disdained to borrow ruined castles, dripping caverns, agitated tapestries, mysterious veils, mechanical spectres, and other picturesque and gorgeous matters from the yet open shop of Anne Radcliffe; she made a still sterner sacrifice; she hardened her heart against all amiable weaknesses, sudden impulses, uncontrollable emotions, and fever fits of the heart and understanding, which form the stock-in-trade of some of her contemporaries. Nay, she would endure no swoonings in picturesque positions; no love makings beside water-falls, no weepings by the side of the new-spring flower, or clapping of hands at the sight of the rising moon, or ecstatic fits at hearing a red-breast singing on the top of a withered tree. She looked on man as something high and noble, and on woman as intended to be useful both by look and hand, and treated them accordingly. She draws her scenes in the sober colours of

reality; she uses no tints warmer than life, and seldom or ever seeks to excite her readers by representing the fiercer and sterner passions of our nature. In foregoing these easy embellishments, she made no sacrifice, for her object was utility, not effect. "Her books," says Gifford, "so far from lending any countenance to vice, even in its refined and most agreeable form, afford some of the best lessons of practical morality with which we are acquainted. They teach, not merely by dry general maxims on one hand, or by splendid examples on the other, but by reasons put into the mouths of the actors themselves, what is the right mode of conduct in circumstances of difficulty or temptation. She is constantly endeavouring to point out, by the discussion of cases judiciously selected or ingeniously invented, what is the road by which virtue conducts us to happiness. There is hardly any good quality to which Miss Edgeworth has not contributed her powerful recommendation; but the ultimate rewards of steadiness, independence, and honest persevering exertion, are those which she is fondest of setting before our eyes; and we think her choice is sanctioned by the value of the doctrines which she inculcates."

Had it been her pleasuse to have added a little of the poetic fervour of her own island to her pictures of life, and introduced more of the outbursting passions, and high feeling, and vagrant impulse, which characterize the Irish peasantry, we own it would have been more to our mind; for she is occasionally too didactic and too wise: she forgets that folly must not always wear the curb, nor fountains be for ever dammed up. She walks by the side of her characters as Mentor by the side of Telemachus, keeping them out of all manner of pleasant mischief, and wagging the monitory head, and waving the remonstrating finger, should their eyes brighten or their breath come thick at approaching adventures. Her 'Patronage,' her 'Tales of Fashionable Life,' 'Belinda,' 'Castle Rack-rent,' 'Popular and Moral Tales,' &c. will carry her name to remote times, not only as a benefactress, but as a painter of life and character. She is diminutive in stature, quick of eye, and fluent and agreeable in conversation.

JANE AND ANNA MARIA PORTER.

OF the two sisters it may be said that they have both obtained distinction in the ranks of imaginative writers, and that their works are numerous, and more or less marked by a sense of the heroic, and a love of all that is wise and virtuous. The former, in her 'Scottish Chiefs,' relates the fortunes of Wallace, and frequently interests our heart and excites our imagination; she is true to the gallant bearing, dauntless courage, and resolution to do or die, which all have united in allowing him; nor is she insensible to his private virtues—his constancy in friendship and in love, and his affection for his father, whose fall he more than avenged. She has, however, added attributes which neither pertained to the times nor to the hero: Wallace loved to sleep in the wild woods in his steel harness, surprise his enemies in the dead of night, storm their castles, and in battle smite with an unsparing sword; in reply to the offer of an earldom, by Edward, he said he loved better to see the blood of his enemies than their gold—their graves rather than their lands; she has

drawn him with a hand much too soft and gentle. The works of Anna Maria amount to nearly fifty volumes ; nor are those of Jane much less numerous. The first is one of those early prodigies in literature who astonish their friends and perplex biographers. She wrote and published her 'Artless Tales' at twelve years of age. She was, when some six years old, acquainted with Walter Scott ; it was his custom, when let loose from school, to hasten to her mother's residence, and tell her interminable stories of faerie and witchcraft. They are sisters to Sir Robert Kerr Porter, and exhibit no small degree of his singular panoramic skill in the conception of their scenes, the distribution of the groups, and the light and shade of composition. They are better acquainted with external form than inward emotion ; though in all their works there are scattered passages gentle and affectionate. Their lives have been as blameless as their composition. Anna Maria died on the 21st of September, 1832 ; Jane, the most eminent, survives.

SCOTT.

It has been said, that the "Author of Waverley" looked on all things through a romantic medium; the splendid plantations and finely laid-out inclosures of Abbotsford were created out of a peat-bog; and the house itself, at once convenient and picturesque, was pronounced by a Frenchman to be a romance in stone and lime. This is true also of his romances: the jail of Edinburgh has inspired a story which will last as long as Arthur's seat; from the dry-as-dust materials of vague tradition, he has raised the magnificent edifice of 'Ivanhoe;' from the wild acts and fanatic sayings of the Cameronians, he has made a story of lasting interest; and out of a Blacksmith, labouring in the smut of his forge, he has created a hero both in mind and courage, and left him a labourer in fire still. To do all this—and this is but a tithe of what he did—required imagination, sensibility, knowledge of character, an eye for all that is beautiful, a heart for all that is heroic, added to powers of combination and description, such as none but a poet of a high order ever possessed.

He found the prose fiction of his country deformed by many strange inventions, inoculated with much false sentiment, overwhelmed with idly minute descriptions, and the voice of nature nearly lost in that of affectation; he reformed and restored it in far more than its original beauty. He re-inspired whatever his own heart pronounced good in the narratives of his predecessors and contemporaries, and he added a breadth and variety of character, a dramatic life and vigour, and a poetic richness and elevation which has rendered our best prose romances more than a match, in general interest, to our best poems. Lord Byron poured out poem after poem, Scott poured out romance after romance; the poetry of the one, and the prose of the other, became so popular that no other works were regarded, and the question was, which of the two was the greater. Without attempting to decide this, it may be safely said, that as Byron had formerly triumphed over Scott in song, Byron was certainly triumphed over in his turn by Scott in prose: and yet not one word of vexation or envy was uttered by either of those illustrious spirits; on the contrary, they spoke and wrote of one another with respect and affection.

Scott chose at first to engage in this new adventure with his beaver down ; and the Waverley novels were given to the world under imaginary names. When Napoleon escaped from Elba, and appeared in Paris with a hundred thousand men at his back, his coming confounded the world no more than did these marvellous novels, when fiction after fiction came pouring upon the public. First, 'Waverley,' with its mountain chiefs and highland manners ; secondly, 'Guy Mannering,' redolent of the lowlands, with its glorious peasant Dinmont, and its half-inspired gipsy, Meg Merrilies ; thirdly, 'The Antiquary,' with the inimitable Edie Ochiltree and Monkbarns ; fourthly, 'Rob Roy,' with Baillie Jarvie and Andrew Fairservice, of the parish of Dreepdaily, where lang-kale were raised under hand-glasses ; fifthly, 'The Black Dwarf,' and the matchless 'Old Mortality,' with its Balfour of Burley, who fought the devil and killed the Dutchman, the fiery and fierce Claverhouse, the reckless Bothwell, the sly and courageous Cuddie, who could make his ain wee pickle sense gang farther than his mother could make hers, though she spoke like a minister ; sixthly, 'The Heart of Mid-Lothian,' redeemed from the stain of the jail by Jeanie Deans and

Effie her sister—by Madge Wildfire, one of the most natural of all creations, not forgetting Douce Davie Deans, who thought it a marvel that a small pistol could kill a big blustering fellow, and Daddie Rat, whose soul was always in a swither whether to be honest or knavish, and who offered to take Jeanie Deans to a cannie howf in the Pleasants, where a' the Procurator Fiscals in Scotland should no catch her; seventhly, 'The Legend of Montrose,' of which the hero is Sir Dugald Dalgetty, a bold mercenary, who, like Colonel Urrey, of the same wars, sold his sword to either king or parliament; eighthly, 'The Bride of Lammermoor,' saddened all over with a presentiment of coming misery, with its haughty Ravenswood, Blind Alice, and Johnnie Mortsheugh, who could either prepare a grave or screw the pegs of his fiddle, as chance sent customers; and, ninthly, the magnificent romance of 'Ivanhoe,' adorned by the sublime Rebecca, with such flashes of bravery and drollery from the Black Knight and Friar Tuck as have been nowhere equalled.

These are but the first course of princely fictions which Scott served up to the public—others followed with marvellous rapidity; some as good, and others worse, than those I have

named, but all marked with the same extraordinary powers of conception, both of subject and character. It may be observed of the second series, that in one or two instances, the author introduced spiritual agencies—not ghosts of legerdemain manufacture, but those unembodied forms which the vanity of man imagines God has placed over him, to aid in working out his fortune and protect him from the influence of the spirits of evil. Of this kind was the White Lady of Avenel; the idea was fine—she did her ministering for some time deftly enough, and much to the edification of the public, particularly when she soused the Monk in the Tweed, and sang her unearthly song; but all lovers of the marvellous stared when she cured the priest whom Christie of Clinthill had slain; repaired the mortal gash in the body of Percy Shafton; and dug a grave and filled it up, so that even ploughmen could not tell it from solid ground. All these were errors of the first magnitude; and had Scott said to himself, Go to, I shall bring spiritual agency into contempt—he could not have been more successful. He next made an effort of another kind in the same way; he set his spiritual spinning-jennies in motion to scare the iron-nerved round-head

leaders of Oliver Cromwell. The trick was not successful. Mrs. Radcliffe surpassed him far in these wooden contrivances; and it seems he felt he had not succeeded in his "spiriting;" he confessed the White Maid to be a failure; and as for mechanical devils he never tried them again.

With real flesh and blood he wrought marvels enough. No writer since the days of Shakspeare has created so many fine, healthy, life-like, and original characters; other novelists may boast of a couple, or four, or half-a-dozen; but eight or ten in one fiction is common to Scott. There are a dozen in the 'Fortunes of Nigel' alone—all unlike one another, clearly belonging to different families, and with nothing in common, save the air they breathe. He had no great knack in making heroes and heroines; his creations of this sort—always with the exception of Diana Vernon—have less attraction about them than what is really necessary to carry on the story. Yet, on closer examination, and when the hurry of a first perusal is over, we shall find a thousand indications of delicacy of feeling, and a thousand intimations of the tender passion, which we had before overlooked. See, for instance, with how much neatness, and in what graceful touches, he acquaints us not

only with the deep love with which Julia Man-
nering regarded Bertram, but exhibits the pas-
sion at work. In his *Edith Plantagenet*, too,
he has shown how gracefully true love sits on
a noble nature. Yet the charm of his stories
resides in what may be called the subordinate
characters: of these he has troops and batta-
lions, all different from each other, yet all like
nature. The Dougal creature could not talk
like Andrew Fairservice; nor could Andrew
brave the dangers of witches and cut-throats in
caverns like his namesake Dinmont; Charlies-
hope, again, is quite another sort of a rustic
from Cuddie Headrigg; nor could Cuddie hold
the candle to Edie Ochiltree, who has a spice of
poetry and mischief in his nature: all these differ
from Richie Moniplies; nor can the wise and
faithful Richie be named with Harry Wynd, the
smith, who was the meekest man in Perth, and
only fought with Highlandmen when he found
them on the south side of Stirling bridge. In
the higher characters we have the same won-
drous variety. The military antiquarian, Cosmo
Bradwardine, is quite unlike the civil antequa-
rian Monkbarns, who boasted so much of his
ancestor the printer, that his nephew alleged
his veins were filled with printer's ink; and both

differ from Guy Mannering, whose love of ancestry and attachment to bandy-legged dogs are visible as his bravery. Then we have the singular Rob Roy: one day a burly drover, saying a civil word to every one, and turning an honest penny in a quiet way; and another day, a wild, daring, Highland chief, crying, "Dinna maister me, man—my foot's on my native heath, and my name's Macgregor!" It has been remarked, that Scott has made all his characters talk professionally; for instance, Guy Mannering speaks like a soldier, and uses terms of war in conversation; while Pleydell carries the Court of Session about with him: there is probably too much of this; but our conversation is at least coloured by what engages our daily thoughts; and it cannot be denied that Scott has exhibited the character by other marks, and only calls these in as aids to make the picture perfect.

All the qualities which pleased us in his poetry, re-appear in his romances, with the addition of the dramatic drolleries and humbler humanities of rustic life. There is everywhere a singular and happy mixture of the higher and lower qualities: he lives more in the upper, and yet as much in the lower air, as Fielding: he has all the fertility of Smollett,

and all the poetic glow of Wilson. He is remarkable for rapid vehemence of narrative. All with Scott is easy—he never labours; he always masters his subject, and never exhausts it. He stands without a rival at the head of Prose Fiction; and it is to his praise that he found his subjects chiefly in his native island.

R. C. MATURIN

HAS been fondly called the Walter Scott of Ireland; and it must be owned that fine elements of fiction are visible in his works—glimpses of original character—flashes of intellectual light—snatches of impressive dialogue, united to an occasional force of handling, all of which belong to the great masters of romance;—but then these beauties are overlaid with rubbish. He wanted the taste to prepare the materials which he amassed. He planned his structure, squared some of the stones, rounded some of the columns, carved a few of the capitals, and then began to build; but, unlike all other architects, he employed unhewn stones with hewn, and reared a lofty edifice enough, but one out of all keeping, without beauty of

finish, or true unity of parts. He neither raised a rude Stonehenge, nor built a scientific St. Paul's; but did both in one, and produced a monster. All this and more is visible in his 'Women' and his 'Melmoth.' The first is an Irish story, wild, wonderful, and savage, with many redeeming touches of pathos and beauty, and brought frequently back from extravagance by fine traits of character. The second is not altogether so mad as some reviewers pronounced it; yet sufficiently so to excuse thousands for closing their eyes against the poetic invention and buoyancy of fancy everywhere visible. The hero of the story is a second Faustus, who has bartered his soul with Satan for protracted life and unlimited enjoyment; and the heroine is a sort of goddess—a virgin of the sea—who lives amid her isles working enchantments like Circe, and marries the devil's dupe, and dies in the dungeons of the Inquisition. It is said that the man was almost as wild as his productions; he seldom spoke to any one after the first interview, imagining once to be condescension enough in so fine a genius; and in hours of more than common emotion, he placed a wafer on his brow—a sign to his servants not to intrude upon him.

LADY MORGAN.

‘THE WILD IRISH GIRL’ first made Lady Morgan known to the world. It has much of the natural both in character and delineation, and a certain pleasing wildness of manner intertwining itself with the joyous realities of social life. The work, though coming from a young spirit, intimated a growing discernment, an acuteness of observation, and a readiness of wit, of which she has since given many specimens. ‘The Novice of St. Dominick,’ amid much fine description and scenes of passion, had a natural tone at once earnest and touching. Nor was ‘Ida of Athens’ without its attractions, though severely handled by Gifford, that Anarch old, and exhibited as ridiculous, in a criticism written for the purpose of crushing it. The novels of Lady Morgan are not her best works. She is a painter of manners, not imaginary but real; of scenes, not of fancy but reality; and of characters such as are visible in flesh and blood, and have taken a part in the great drama of existence. In these historic delineations she is perhaps without an equal: the character is some-

times limned at full-length; sometimes exhibited in profile, and even like the portraits of Vandyke, some of the heads look over the shoulder; but she never misses to give their spirit, or to seize on the character in the mass. She works, indeed, in strong light and shade, and occasionally gives a person of dignity no very dignified employment; but she is always clear and intelligible; and, moreover, aims in all her works to spread a love of freedom and hatred of oppression. She has written too openly, too bitterly, and too cleverly not to have enemies, strong as well as numerous. Her works on France and on Italy have made her name popular abroad. In foreign lands she is received as a benefactress: here her sentiments have been misrepresented or ridiculed; and she has been subjected to such personal abuse, as, I believe, no lady has ever been doomed to suffer. This is unjust as well as discourteous, and ought not to be. In all she writes there is genius and that of very varied kind: there is wit, humour, tenderness, heroism, love of country, and a fine vein of light and agreeable fancy. Some of her sentiments, are, no doubt, unwelcome to one party in the state; but why should her merits be weighed in a party balance? The presence

of genius in her works ought to protect her against such rudeness and incivility.

HANNAH MORE.

OF Hannah More it is not easy to speak: the sentiments which she utters have a scriptural source, and the aim of her writings is the eternal welfare of mankind; to this high purpose she has devoted some score or more of closely-printed volumes; but though she has sometimes aided the influence of religious feeling by dramatic details and the introduction of character, she has never succeeded in communicating that life or variety which brings popularity, and scatters works of fiction from the palace to the hovel. In religious romance no one has come near the inventor and maker, honest John Bunyan: his abstract personifications have all the peculiarity and life which belong to persons of flesh and blood: not so the allegorical personages of others; they come like shadows, and as shadows depart; they speak, it is true, but we listen to their speeches as we would to

A wooden head haranguing,
With prompting priest behind the hanging.

We are no admirers of religious romances ; we are content with the New Testament, and prefer the simple language of our Saviour to all the glosses of the learned and the speculations of the ingenious. The most inspired can never reach the “ height of that great argument,” nor better express our duty to God and man, than Christ and his Apostles have expressed it. We listen with reverence to speculations from the pulpit, but with impatience to all lay-lectures—to the dogmas of the “ unco good, or of the rigidly righteous.”

MRS. INCHBALD.

THE ‘ Simple Story,’ and the ‘ Nature and Art,’ attracted much attention ; and when the world was satisfied with the perusal, there was something about the authoress herself to awaken curiosity. She was an admirable novelist, shrewd and observing ; and a handsome woman ; yet she resembled the rest of her sex so little, that she took little pains to render her person agreeable, and set so little store by the elegancies of life, that she lived in a mean way, and ate fruit and drank water like an anchorite. That

one admired as an authoress, and who had by her genius achieved a small independence, should do all this, excited some wonder ; but her diaries have solved the problem : she lived in a simple way that she might be independent, and also apply the residue of her income to the maintenance of her sister, and to deeds of benevolence and charity. Such goodness of heart as this ought to preserve her name as something of a rarity, should her works be forgotten ; but of that there is little fear—nature always takes care of her own.

JANE AUSTEN.

THE works of Jane Austen have quietly won their way to the public heart, as all works of genius will. She is a prudent writer ; there is good sense in all she says, a propriety in all her actions ; and she sets her face zealously against romantic attachments and sentimental associations. She lived and died a spinster ; yet she seems to have had a large experience in the perfidy of all attachments which belonged not to prudence and calculation. When Dumbiedykes fell in love, it was with a lady who sat next

him in the kirk, and that put it into his head ; in like manner Miss Austen's heroes and heroines are touched most sensibly when the object of their contemplation stands on a fair estate, or is endowed with bonds and bills, and other convertible commodities. "On the whole," says the *Quarterly Review*, "Miss Austen's works may safely be recommended, not only as among the most unexceptionable of their class, but as combining, in an eminent degree, instruction and amusement." Her works are 'Sense and Sensibility,' 'Pride and Prejudice,' 'Mansfield Park,' 'Emma,' 'Northanger Abbey,' and 'Persuasion.'

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD

Is no sighing sister like Hannah More, but a kindly and gladsome lady, who promotes the happiness of the nation by her hearty sketches of domestic manners, rural pursuits, village pastimes, and her all but living portraits of cottage dames and rustic husbandmen. In doing this, she is promoting morality and true devotion, more than if she were to come abroad in a religious allegory, and prove to the world that we are sunk in folly and sin, and that hell

is gaping for the nine-tenths of mankind. She commits no such folly : she takes a walk down the greenwood glades, drops into the smoking cottage, sees the healthy child in the cradle, and the fatpot on the fire, and the thrifty housewife presiding over all ; she extends her walk to the fields—sees the shepherd on his hill, the rustic at the plough, eyes the growing crops, aids the farmer in calculating the promise of the year, and returns home through the village, where the hinds play at bowls, publicans burnish their pewter, and some staid old squire, who loves to look on his patrimonial timber, comes sauntering along, and gossips with her about merry old times, and resolves, from something which she has said, to send a Christmas log and a junk of beef to all his poor neighbours. No one has painted with such a true hand, and in such natural colours, the joys and sorrows which crowd the landscape of humble life ; she has looked through and through society, and the result is those sketches and tales which vindicate Old England from the aspersions of Crabbe. Those who desire to feel how the unsophisticated heart of the country beats—who wish to see the peasantry at wakes, and fairs, and festivals, must have recourse to the works

of this accomplished authoress. She is no dealer in the poetic and the lofty—she limns us no high-souled maidens, mourning under the moon, and sighing out fantastic woe; on the contrary, she deals in the sober realities of existence, and uses colours of a modest and quaker-like hue. Neither does she seem anxious about strong contrasts or studied effects: yet all is in unity and strict harmony. That she does not study this, would be to say, that she is not a mistress of the art in which she excels: we have all the effect of study without its appearance; every incident drops naturally into its place, and every portrait takes up its individual position. To all this she unites admirable good sense, and a thoughtfulness and penetration alike original and pleasing.

She made her first debut as a poetess; and no doubt the practice of “the art unteachable, untaught,” introduced her to the study of character and scene, in which she has since excelled. It also taught her, what it taught Franklin—a graphic truth of language and readiness of illustration, peculiar to poets who excel in prose. It is not alone as a mistress in the art of domestic fiction that we have to regard her: she has made a strong impression on the public mind as

a dramatist, and has witnessed the slope of wet faces from the pit to the roof, of which Cowper speaks as the accompaniment of a well-written and well-acted tragedy. She is, perhaps, not quite aware of the deep hold which her compositions have taken of the heart of the country. One friend of mine (Ritchie), now in the grave, proved himself a stern and stubborn critic in all works save those of Miss Mitford—Mary Mitford, as he loved to call her. “How could I be otherwise than kind?” said he, the last time I had the joy of meeting him, “she speaks to the heart and to the understanding, and deals in rational beings and landscapes, such as a plain man may hope to see without going to another world. She is the only painter of true English nature that I know of: the rest are splendid daubers—all light and shade, darkness and sunshine; Mary Mitford gives the land and the people, and for that I honour her.”

THEODORE HOOK

MAY be compared, for the sake of contrast, with Miss Mitford: she is of the country, he is of the town; she paints life in its more natural

state—he limns it plumed, padded, and jewelled; she bids nature speak in a free unsophisticated way—he opens the lips of his pert misses and mincing madams, and they utter the affectations of artificial life. Mitford is of God, and Hook is of man—we mean no more than that both are true in their delineations: for Theodore’s page mirrors back the patched face and false love-locks of this great city, with as much clearness as that of Mary reflects country sun-burned beauties, with corn braided in their locks at harvest-home. It would not be easy to find another artist with ability equal to Hook’s for discussing the good and evil, the passions and affectations, the fits of generosity and settled systems of saving, the self-sufficiency and the deplorable weakness, the light and darkness, the virtue and the vice, of this prodigious Babel. The stories which he tells might be invented with little outlay of fancy, for the best of them are far from being either clear or consistent; but the characters, which live and breathe in them, would make the narratives pleasing, though they were as crooked as the walls of Troy. How skilfully he unfolds the character of his man of a million in fixed and floating capital; unbuttons him by

degrees; shows him in his counting-house, amid his slender clerks, allowing his goodly waistcoat, stuffed with wine and venison, to project upon the desk before him, while, with spectacle on nose, he runs his calculating eyes up the fertile columns of a balanced account, and, grunting approbation, signs his name to his twelvemonths' profit, six figures deep, takes the arm of his chief clerk to help him into his low-hung carriage, which moves off with groaning springs to his country box crowning a pleasant lawn, where he dozes and dreams of other speculations and heavier gains.

Hook's defects are those of his subject more than of himself. He chooses to write of what he knows best; and cannot imagine, and scarcely cares, how he is felt by the country bred, and those whom London has not sharpened till their fingers are like fish-hooks. He speaks a language, and writes of a people, not understood, and nearly unknown, to the shepherd, the husbandman, the mechanic, and the farmer. They cannot comprehend the affected manners which he paints, or imagine what sort of unhappy creatures he lives among—they are of the pitchfork, he of the silver fork, school. He ridicules

all who eat without silver plate, or convey their meat to their mouth in the readiest way ; they, on the contrary, laugh at the follies of the wealthy, and seem disposed, at a feast, to eat, like the heroes in Virgil, their plates as well as their meat. These frivolities cross us frequently in Hook's works ; and we never meet them but they remind us of the penalty which those must pay who deal with the husk of society and not with the heart. Such touches of manners and fashion are like the hooped petticoats, the lead-loaded sleeves, and the toupeed locks of our grandmothers—they are dropped and forgotten ; nothing is lasting but natural emotion and the language of the heart. Hook has other claims to our notice than for fictions respecting town life : he is remarkable for his agreeable manners and his ready wit ; his jokes are as numerous, and sometimes as good, as those of Joe Miller—indeed, booksellers talk of drawing the city puns up in rank and file, under the command of Theodore Hook. In extempore verse he is wondrously expert ; give him a bottle of champagne and a subject, and he finds rhymes and air, and acquits himself with no little happiness. The squibs and lam-

poons ascribed to him are not few; but no doubt his name is compelled to carry the lead of others along with his own gold.

JAMES HOGG.

PERHAPS a greater contrast to Miss Mitford and Mr. Hook cannot well be named than James Hogg. He sees the world under a light which never shone for them: and, though all that he writes is from nature, from what he sees, feels, and imagines, his nature is not their nature; in short, he has nothing in common with them, not even the language! He speaks, indeed, as others do of shepherd maids and shepherd swains; he introduces them into his stories, with their hopes, their fears, their notions, and their whims, and puts the earth below them and the heaven above them; but then he throws a spell into the air, and shows the works of his hand by a supernatural light—a halo, such as no one else has at command. This is the wizard light which leads him astray; he goes sauntering on under its influence, dry-footed himself, but heedless of the

Mosses, waters, slaps, and stiles,

which lie in the way of his readers. He conceives his story well, and he gathers materials with diligence, but he has not the patience to modify the natural and the supernatural till they unite harmoniously; he tosses all into a wild heap, out of which no one can extract a clear and a probable story. This is the chief fault of his two prose romances, called, 'The Three Perils of Man,' and 'The Three Perils of Woman;' sometimes the structure which he designed to raise hovers like a shadowy edifice before the eye of the reader, who loses sight of it and hurries forward, then obtains a glimpse, perhaps, of one of the battlements, or of the portico, and has never the pleasure of beholding more. Another of his faults is, he is constantly labouring to create heroic characters, while he has not the remotest notion of what the heroic is: his cavaliers are fierce cut-throats or rude clowns, who no more resemble the true souls of fire and minds of *noblaye*, than a clown's clog resembles a lady's silver-heeled slipper. He is subject, too, to strange fits of wandering; and it is his pleasure to indulge in long and unfruitful conversations, in which the story, instead of going forward, does worse even than stand still, for it travels back. Nor is he without other blemishes,

which are slow to be forgiven by the world—he deals now and then in over-warm language and gross allusions, forgetting that the present century is the most decorous, at least in speech, of any of the nineteen.

His faults are not few, his beauties are numerous, and some of them of a high order. He is quite an original in everything: all is unbought and unborrowed; he would not consider a style, or a sentiment, or a story even, as worth the trouble of carriage. He flies his own free flight, and will neither rise higher nor descend lower, for love or reproach. When he chooses to be simple and unaffected, there are few to match him: his ‘Wool-Gatherer,’ some of his ‘Winter Night’s Tales’—which, instead of lengthening the nights, as a surly critic averred, shortened them for thousands—his ‘Brownie of Bodsbeck,’ and, indeed, all his fictions, exhibit much of the innocence, and truth, and blamelessness of pastoral life. In his finer moods, no one has equalled him in the rare power of uniting the elegance of superstitious fancy with the realities of life. But, then, were he to throw the mantle of his inspiration over Bow Church instead of Yarrow Hill, it would be a sad waste of his powers: he is for the country, and a country, too, where the

people have imagination to keep a look-out, as Burns said he did, on suspicious places. He will, probably, be the last of the race of the imaginative: all poetic impulses of a high fancy are wearing out; a rail-road has been driven right through the land of dread, and the horn of the mail-coach sounds where fairies danced to the sound of their elfin minstrelsy.

THOMAS HOPE,

As author of 'Anastasius,' claims a place among the children of fiction. He has little in common, except talent, with our popular novelists; he seems to have formed his taste in a Greek school, kept by an oriental scholar: there is much that is classic, and but little that is English. The land over which his hero is conducted is a foreign soil, and we imagine that he walks, and looks, and converses, with a native air, because we are ourselves little acquainted with the country and the people. Hope has a pure and a quick fancy, and maintains the spirit and manner of his characters with remarkable consistency and truth. "It would be impossible," says Gifford, "to turn

over a score of pages without encountering some happy sketch of character, some originality of thought, or some sentiment, if not entirely new, yet invested with much of the charm of novelty, by the slyness of insinuation and shrewdness of expression in which it is conveyed." The faults of the work are two-fold: the chief character is a cold-hearted scoundrel, whom we loathe from our soul, and the language is neither prose nor poetry, but a

Babylonish dialect,
Which learned pedants most affect.

He was an accomplished gentleman, of much taste in the fine arts, and liberal, generous, and humane.

BECKFORD.

OF the 'Vathek' of Beckford, England cannot well claim the inspiration; for, though its words are hers, all that renders those words touching or expressive is of another land. It is little known, and was never popular with the public; it has admirers among the ingenious and the travelled, who can appreciate its merits, and feel its claims to originality.

JOHN GALT.

OF another kind, and a far different school, is John Galt, author of the 'Annals of the Parish,' 'Sir Andrew Wylie,' and 'Lawrie Todd.' He has no classic predilections, and sets up no favourite author as a model; he aims at no studied elegance of phrase, cares nothing for formal accuracy of costume, seems not at all solicitous about the dignity of human nature, and thinks chivalry a joke. He leaves all these matters to take care of themselves, and sets to work to read us a chapter of living life, like one sure of securing listeners. There can be nothing more simple than the way in which he commences his enchantments : he contents himself, like the mariner of the glittering eye, with starting from no 'vantage ground—"There was a man," quoth he, and away he goes, looking neither to the right for fine things, nor to the left for the picturesque, but fixing his eye steadily on the object before him. As he proceeds we begin to feel his sorcery; the characters, ordinary looking, and promising to be bores at first, gradually unfold their peculiarities; the

simplicity of one, the dry humour of a second, the worldly wisdom of a third, and the sly selfishness of a fourth, grow upon us; our brow, at first clouded and doubting, begins to clear up; we find things to smile at; touches of quiet humour, sharp, sarcastic rubs, happy, natural passages work their good work; we smile—then laugh outright, and think of nothing else till we find the author at the end of his work, and the singular web of fiction woven.

In all the history of literature, I know nothing more real, and in better truth and good keeping, than the 'Annals of the Parish;' 'The Ayrshire Legatees' has something of the same, and so has 'The Provost.' The Rev. Micah Balwhidder is a man by himself. Blessed with experience in wives, and living in rather a retired parish, the good man pursues the even tenor of his way, marvelling at nothing which would have made others marvel, and wondering where there was little cause for wondering. He sees the French Revolution burst around, and likens it to the rise in tobacco consequent on a war which took place, he was told, in the West; one Mrs. Balwhidder dies, and he supplies her place, at the end of a year and a day, from the contents of a neighbouring pew in the kirk: in

short, nothing disturbs his tranquillity, save such whiffling matters as should not move it. All the other works of the author share largely in this sort of quiet originality, but they are more stirring and ambitious, and aspire to the historical and the national: his 'Southennan,' 'Sir Andrew Wylie,' 'Stanley Buxton,' 'Ringan Gilhaize,' and others, unite history with romance, and give us a picture of the times, and detail some of the events which influenced the weal or woe of the country. I am of those, and I suspect they are not few, who prefer this author's domestic to his historical delineations: in detailing private adventures he is all but unrivalled; all is easy, flowing, and unaffected; characters burst out as thick as buds in a May morning, and the lively din of gossip commences, which we wish may run on for ever. In heroics he is like a man in mail; his motions are constrained, and his step is measured, and what he does he seems to do with difficulty. He makes his heroes perform acts not at all in keeping with their characters: for instance, Ringan Gilhaize, at the battle of Killiecrankie, snaps his carabine from behind a fence at Claverhouse—then hammers his flint, tries again, and it burns priming—at last it goes off, and the reader almost cries "Murder!" He

loads the character, too, of Archbishop Sharpe with more varied infamy than necessary; the spirit of persecution, which was strong within him, gave darkness sufficient for the purposes of romance.

The genius of Galt is not exclusively Scottish, though critics aver that his works wear the northern livery, and breathe of the west. Much of the language is, indeed, peculiar, but the characters, slightly modified by situation, are those common to all the world. The conception of his 'Lawrie Todd' is as natural as it is poetic; he has the spirit of a hero of romance, and, though small of stature and weak of body, and deformed likewise, he marches away into the great western wilderness of America, and calling his head into action, causes desolation to vanish and cultivation to appear, and for the reign of the lynx and the bear, establishes that of man. Galt's great charm resides in his dramatic conversations; to listen to his old dames—speaking of their own experiences in life, and of their influence in other days, and every now and then all but pitying the lack of good looks, and the absence of mental endowments, and the little inclination to thrift, among the living race of blooming spinsters—is to put one's self under

the wand of the enchanter, for from him there is no escape. In person Mr. Galt is tall, his looks manly, his conversation fluent; he is a steady friend, and an agreeable companion.

JOHN WILSON.

I SHOULD like to live in a world of John Wilson's making : how lovely would be the hills, how romantic the mountains, how clear the skies, how beauteous the light of the half-risen sun, how full of Paradise the vales, and of music the streams ! The song of the birds would be for ever heard, the bound of the deer for ever seen ; thistles would refuse to grow, and hail-showers to descend ; while, amid the whole, woman would walk a pure and unspotted creature, clothed with loveliness as with a garment, the flowers desirous of being pressed by her white feet, the wind feeling enriched by her breath, while the eagle above would hesitate to pounce upon the lambs, charmed into a dove by the presence of beauty and innocence. Is this too fair a picture of the works in prose fiction of Wilson—the gay, the witty, the critical, the ironical, the eloquent ? No ; it is but a daub com-

pared to the splendid pictures which he sends forth to the world. In the presence of the works of Wilson the second, the landscapes of Wilson the first are shorn of their beams: the poetry of him of Wales is surpassed by him of Scotland; and all the colours of the Academy could not rival the harmonious magnificence of the landscape for which the professor spreads his palette. He is the most imaginative of all our writers of fiction; to all that is lovely in the realms of reality he unites all that is ethereal in the dominions of fancy; he looks on nature with the affectionate eye of a true poet, and leaving the thorns, and briars, and puddles, to the Crabbes of romance, gives us only what is considered beautiful by a mind filled with the divinity of beauty. This is the excellence, and it is also the defect, of the romantic tales of Wilson. The rose has its thorn, and human nature its foibles and its follies. He has too much of ideal loveliness—too much of the poetic abstract of perfection, and too little of man and manners, of passions and of opinions—of the leaven of common life: these are to the poetical in tale-telling, what the husk is to the nut, to protect and adorn it by contrast. Apples are more beautiful hanging on the tree amid all

their leaves, than when plucked and placed in a heap, though diffusing odour all around. Wilson addresses himself to minds almost exclusively poetic; he knows—none better—that the world is somewhat prosaic and dull, and loth to applaud the sublime flights of fancy; nay, like the cow in the flower garden, it treads the most fragrant and lovely things—lilies, roses, and what not—down with its great cloven hoofs, and hurries to the beds of cabbage and kale. He has skill and talent fit for uniting the prose and poetry of life together: see with what fine tact and ready wit he deals out his sallies of humour, and sarcasm, and praise, and criticism, in his dramatic papers, so long the charm in *Blackwood*.

The chief prose works of Wilson are the ‘Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life and Character,’ ‘The Trials of Margaret Lyndsay,’ and ‘The Foresters.’ They are justly popular. They are works of a fine fancy, and of a heart bathed in the sweetest things of nature. They are full, too, of human interest; the lovely creatures whom he depicts, are not made to fill up ball-rooms and head the dance: they are endowed with warm affections, and perform the parts of wives, and daughters, and true loves, with all the

nature, and with ten times more grace than they are performed in polished life. His pathos and his tenderness are all his own, and promise to endure; many of his characters, particularly those of women are original and peculiar; they are all sensible of the charms of mildness and modesty, and walk in loveliness as the sun in light. All the grand elements of genius are in Wilson: he has shown great and various powers: he may be whatever he chooses to be, save young again; but then the pleasure is, he is far from old. His dramatic talents are as great as his other poems, and in poetic criticism he excels.

HORACE SMITH

BECAME known to the world by his successful parodies on some of the chief poets; and so close were his imitations, that some of them might have been mistaken for the work of Crabbe and Scott—they were like as lark resembles lark. In his imitations of Scott as a romance writer he was in earnest, but not so successful: and yet he achieved much. In his ‘Brambletye House,’ ‘Tor Hill,’ and other tales, he con-

structed his stories with skill, placed his characters at their proper posts, combined into one clear and comprehensive narrative a succession of incidents, domestic and historic, and gave the whole the hue and costume of the times in which they were laid. But he lacked somewhat of the air and life which distinguish the narratives of the great magician of the north: he had the shape, and hue, and look, and but little more; he mustered his forces, but they marched like raw recruits, rather than disciplined heroes: the reader felt conscious that they were described, rather than exhibited; he took them not into his friendship, nor spoke of them as new acquaintances. The want of reality is a sore want; yet, in several instances, the author showed that he could both create and feel; in his female characters nature triumphed—he drew them from flesh and blood, and not from tapestry; their words and actions continue with us, while we remember but the outlines of his Roundheads and Cavaliers. There is an occasional excess of the descriptive in his stories, and this is true of his characters as well as of his scenes: in equipping his warriors, he enumerates their weapons, and by whom made, and wearies us with delineations of halls and cham-

bers, and lines of road, and plots of garden ground. He is, nevertheless, a good describer, has considerable humour, not a little wit, a quick eye for the ludicrous, and a sympathy with noble natures and heroic deeds, which give him a worthy place among the novelists of these prolific times. He is famous for lively sallies in rhyme, and for pictures of city life and manners in both prose and verse.

JOHN BANIM.

ON the novels of John Banim the world has pronounced, on the whole, a very favourable opinion; and, as it seems not to have been taken hastily up, nor to have been influenced improperly, the opinion may be deemed deliberate and right. Yet I have heard him spoken of as the greatest of all novelists, when the greatest that ever lived was still living; and I have, likewise, heard him condemned, as prolix, extravagant, and unnatural. It is not easy to decide, where such difference of opinion is entertained among men of taste; but it is quite easy to see in the works of Banim, extraordinary breadth, and dramatic power, and life-like vigour

of character, and yet feel that he overflows with words, says a hundred idle things, and pursues conversations till they grow tedious and want coherence and proportion. It is not from what he seems in the eyes of the English nation that he ought to be judged, but from what estimation he has won among those whose manners he has described, and to whom he has given strong passions, indignant bursts of patriotism, and overflowings of tenderness and love. The character of the two islands is in many things different, and works which profess to reflect the spirit, and manners, and feelings of the Irish, should be judged in the spirit of those they personate. To me, the wild fits of despair and exultation, of enthusiasm and despondency, of generosity and guile, which are so abundant in the 'O'Hara Tales,' and other stories from the same author, are seriously overstrained, and sometimes unnatural, though redeemed by ten thousand touches of truth and feeling. Yet I have no doubt—indeed I know it—that they have much of the Green Isle in them, and must be looked upon, in many respects, as strictly historic as well as domestic. It would have been better, however, had it been the pleasure of the author, to have sobered them down a

little—there is more wild action, wild speaking, and passion, and impulse, than is graceful and becoming.

EDWARD LYTTON BULWER

HAS vigorous and varied powers; in all that he has touched on he has shown great mastery; his sense of the noble, the beautiful, or the ludicrous, is strong; he can move at will into the solemn or the sarcastic; he is equally excellent in describing a court or a cottage; and is familiar with gold spurs and with clouted shoon. He unites all his many-coloured materials with the same skill that he shows in collecting them; while through the whole may be seen,—now bright, now dim,—the lights of a free and active fancy. In one work he hits off the court and the parliament, where ladies wave their plumes and the eloquent are on their feet; in a second, he depicts London in the darkness of night, when the wise with their follies, and the vicious with their plots, are all abroad, and the sharper and the shameless wanton come out for prey; and in a third he has introduced us to the proud and the ingenious, debased by poverty and stained

by crime, and exhibited them on the racks of their conscience, more terrible than all the tortures of the law. He is young; but his life has been one of observation : he has all the knowledge which learning can afford, adorned by a genius elegant and poetical. He brings the powers of the poet to aid in all his delineations ; and while he bestows life on whatever he touches, and lends the tongue of nature to his characters, he has generally a moral aim, which we feel rather than perceive—it is the morality of example both in virtue and in vice. His language is free, expressive, and bold ; he abounds in happy passages, nor do they cost him any effort.

This is high praise ; there are, however, sundry drawbacks. If he has great strength, he has also great weakness : his taste seems a wandering light, now glancing on castle tops, mountain heads, and on all that is beautiful and grand ; then shining on swamps, fens, and the “green mantle of the standing pool.” As soon as he says something noble, he hastens to say something low ; into grave discussions he introduces idle conversations ; and for the sake of a smart or a froward thing, scruples not to let dignity fall like Dagon. The materials out of which he constructs his edifice are not all of

a kind; he mingles polished marble with scabbed sand-stone, and resembles the Romans, when they repaired the breaches of the besiegers in their walls with gods and paving-stones, altars of porphyry and broken bricks. We are struck with his extensive acquaintance with the world, and the fine views which he takes on civil policy and social life; but we are soon made to feel the presence of something jarring and unwelcome; and this is as observable in his late work on the Manners, Literature, and Arts of England as in his novels.

Bulwer is devoted to the cause of literature: all his speeches allude to it; his motions in parliament refer to it; and, in private as well as public life, he is its warm and eloquent advocate. No one has shown with such singular boldness, and ready wit, and indignant invective, the degraded condition of the literary men of this island; in other lands, to be inspired is an honour—here it is shame. He seeks to give mind its empire, and to elevate natural genius in Britain as it is in other lands. He shuts his eyes to the height of the mountain he has to remove before this can be accomplished, and works away with the same eagerness as if success were sure. In Britain, wealth or con-

nexion is every thing: all that gives dignity in the church, the army, and in the government, comes of pence or patronage. A man with the mind of Napoleon in war, the eloquence of Taylor in the pulpit, the genius of Shakspeare in song, or of Gibbon in history, has no more chance for honour from government in this free isle than a common hedger or ditcher, unless with genius heaven sends wealth. To repair such crying evils as these, Bulwer has addressed himself. I wish him strength and success.

JOHN GIBSON LOCKHART.

THE fictions of John Gibson Lockhart are very various; they seem all to be the work of different hands, both in conception and finish: they show much knowledge of human life; an acquaintance with all literature that can be called elegant; a sense of the beautiful as well as of the ludicrous; a heart open to the nobler sensations, and an imagination which unites the realities of the visible with the shadowy splendour of the invisible world. He is skilful in delineating the passions; no one can put what is necessary to be said in fewer or clearer words; his scenes are

of many kinds, and all of great force, and some of them of singular tenderness; his characters are of a condition humble or high, as it happens, and more or less emblazoned with the peculiarities of their education; but in the moments of emotion nature triumphs and asserts her birthright; nor has he hesitated to look, at times, sternly or sarcastically on man and his ways, showing that with him the spirit of the age has had its influence.

His works are not numerous; and like the Inigo of Jonson, who stood not on his Latin, he stands not on his fictions, but regards them as the hurried effusions of youth, unripe and unstudied. This may be the case with 'Peter's Letters'—a work which touches on all such matters as caught his eye or touched his fancy during a real or imaginary excursion in the north. The work is all life and character, and about as various as can well be: it treats of courts of law and Glasgow punch; craniology and criticism; tells us how to woo a bride or cut up a haggis; and gives us the pictures, mental and bodily, of some of the leading men of Scotland, with great truth and effect. It is a singular hotch-potch, and full of wit and humour. 'Valerius' seems the product of quite a

different mind; it is learned, yet the learning never weighs down the narrative: it is an image of the domestic condition of the nobler Romans in the days of the Cæsars; but though the skeleton was dug out of the grave, he has clothed it so dexterously with flesh and muscle, and breathed into it so strongly the breath of life, that it seems the work of nature. ‘Adam Blair’ is after another fashion; but, amid scenes of dramatic talent, and passages impressed with the finest sensibilities, there is evidence now and then of the distempered feeling of the German school. ‘Reginald Dalton’ was his last work, and exhibits talents of an order admirably fitted to excel in the study of fiction; but Lockhart was called to another destiny—to judge rather than invent; and seems not to have been unwilling to lay down the enchanter’s wand and take up the critic’s rod.

The variety of character and rapid march of narrative in these works, together with the images which they place before us of man and his passions, were not more welcome to the world than the clear, concise, and direct language in which they are written. Frequently, like Swift, the author scorns all figures of speech or poetic embellishment, and delivers his sen-

timents in free and nervous language; and sometimes the sense of embellished beauty so far overcomes his natural inclination for simplicity, that he indulges in flowers,

And comprehends a world of figures.

These snatches are exquisitely beautiful at times; and much as I admire the sinewy vigour of his plainer style, I wish the muse were more frequently with him, for she inspires him with language equally natural and infinitely more beautiful. Though he has not published volumes of verse, he is in every sense of the word a poet; and it cannot be otherwise than painful to him to pen a criticism when he should write a stanza. His translations of the Spanish and Moorish Ballads have all the simplicity and energy, and picturesque beauty, and more than the flow of the ballads of the Border. The fine old Bible English into which he has rendered them, gives the antique hue so natural and becoming in the old minstrels; all other translations fade away before them.

BENJAMIN D'ISRAELI.

WERE Benjamin D'Israeli to write nothing more than 'Vivian Grey,' 'Contarini Fleming,' and 'The Wondrous Tale of Alroy,' he would deserve a place among imaginative writers, for there is fine poetic feeling and much brightness of fancy in all these works. But it has been his pleasure to try experiments in writing, and these we all know are dangerous; to forsake the beaten path of thought and the common style of language, was a bold thing, and could only be justified by success. 'The Wondrous Tale of Alroy' wears this new costume; and though in many eyes it is strange and fantastic, we cannot but say that the flowing robe of the Asiatic is as much to our mind as the nipped and clipped, and lapelled and puckered dress of the European. He was, however, too bold; he pushed the advantages of the poetic style too far, and indulged in too many eastern figures and flights; when his judgment is riper—for he is very young—he will perhaps compromise the matter, and form an intermediate style, which will mingle European modesty of speech with the fer-

vent language of the children of the sun. He has fine conceptions; and will sorely disappoint us if his fancy drops her wings and refuses to try another flight in the realms of fiction.

J. P. R. JAMES.

IN J. P. R. James we have a novelist of another kind; he belongs to the historical school of fiction, and, like the masters of the art, takes up a real person or a real event, and pursuing the source of history, makes out the intentions of nature by adding circumstances and heightening character, till, like a statue in the hands of the sculptor, the whole is in fair proportion, truth of sentiment and character. For this he has high qualities; an excellent taste, extensive knowledge of history, a right feeling of the chivalrous, and an heroic and a ready eye for the picturesque; his properties are admirable; his sympathy with whatever is high-souled and noble is deep and impressive. His best works are 'Richelieu' and 'Mary of Burgundy.'

REV. GEORGE CROLY.

‘**SALATHIEL,**’ by the Rev. George Croly, is a magnificent fiction : it is the tale of the Wandering Jew ; and as its hero is doomed to long life and to much variety of fortune, he has seen a vast deal ; and his story is of the destinies of nations as well as of his own feelings, experiences, and sorrows. There are many natural scenes, and passages tender and eloquent, but somewhat cold and stately ; it abounds in descriptions on which all the splendours of fancy and language are lavished. The fault of the work is, there can be no sympathy with the adventures of one who suffers to fulfil a curse, and whose life, stretched on the rack of evil fortune, endures for centuries. We feel with Salathiel for eighty years and odd ; and at the close of the usual term of human life, shut our hearts, and commence wondering. The author, in his poem of ‘**May Fair,**’ was more at home ; it contains passages, which, for condensed vigour of thought and language, and sharp severity of rebuke, are not to be paralleled in the ‘**Legion Club**’ of Swift.

MRS. HALL.

IN her Irish stories, Mrs. Hall excels. Her rustic maidens are copied from the cottage; nothing can be more faithful and lively; nor are her hinds and husbandmen anything inferior: we nowhere see the Irish character more justly or so pleasantly represented. She sees nature in proper dimensions; there is fancy, but no exaggeration, and life always.

These are not the whole, and some, I fear, are not the best of our living novelists; more than twenty contributors to our private amusement, and perhaps instruction, remain unnoticed, and must, I am grieved to say, be crowded together in one general notice. ‘The Tremaine’ of WARD; the ‘Matilda’ of LORD MULGRAVE; the ‘Granby’ of LISTER; and many of MRS. GORE’S novels, are works in which the present state of society and manners is more or less clearly impressed: they are pictures of the time, and no more. Something of the same kind may be said even of ‘The Kuzzilbash,’ by FRASER; and the ‘High-ways and By-ways,’ by GRATTAN. The

‘Hajji Baba’ of MORIER is different; and ‘Tales and Confessions’ of LEITCH RITCHIE, the ‘Munster Festivals’ of GRIFFIN, ‘The Witch-finder’ of GASPEY, and the ‘Fairy Legends’ by CROKER, are of another order: on some of the Legends a national character is impressed of a superstitious kind, which awakens poetic associations. The Naval Sketches of MARRYAT, GLASCOCK, CHAMIER, and BASIL HALL, are truths touched slightly by the fingers of fiction. The Author, too, of ‘The Patrician at Sea,’ has a maritime savour about his delineations. As I write wholly from memory, I have endeavoured to express no more than the impressions which a sometimes too hasty perusal has left on my mind; and I am afraid I have not only omitted to name some whom I admire, but probably interpreted erroneously the genius of some I have mentioned. Were I allowed to correct my negligence, I would do it in part by naming the Authoress of ‘Elizabeth de Bruce,’—not so much for the merits of that pleasing work, but for the matchless, the inimitable dramatic introduction to Meg Dods. The supper in the manner of the ancients, and the colloquy between Friar Tuck and King Richard over the venison pasty, alone equal it.

I now prepare to descend from the heights of fiction into the vale of truth: I must leave the path of the eagle for the rail-road, and turn my eyes from the splendid hues of imagination to those of sober reality. The rainbow is no longer under my feet. I quit these regions with the less reluctance, since even among the fairy scenes of fancy and fiction, the Demon of Utility has set up his spinning-jennies, his steam-engines, and established the drab-coloured manufacture. The rivers made famous in many a song, and which run clear in the works of the Muse, are now stained by the labours of the dyer; for crystal waters we have streams of yellow and blue, at which cattle hesitate to drink. In the fairy ring Watt and Boulton have placed a steam-engine of seventy-horse power; and Parnassus, which the poet wished to be planted with vines, resounds with the printing presses employed in that original and intellectual work, the *Penny Magazine*. Some of those, however, who stand high among the poetic and the imaginative, I shall meet again in History, and Biography, and Criticism; for not a few of our leading spirits vindicate the description of genius given by Johnson—great general powers directed to some particular pursuit.

HISTORY.

THE British Historians of the last fifty years are numerous, and some of them of great original genius ; but they are, in general, more remarkable for diligence than dignity ; for graphic spirit of detail, than loftiness of sentiment or massive vigour of narration. The subjects on which they have expatiated are very various, and some of universal interest ; but they may be accused of having seldom chosen one of a complete or a commanding character ; they have taken a portion, and but rarely the whole, and related the story of a settlement, or of an expedition, rather than the united fortunes of a whole people. We have political, religious, military, commercial, constitutional, and colonial histories, exhibiting religious animosities or party hues, and deformed by the sentiments of interest or prejudice ; but none exhibiting in one picture the united energies of a great nation, in arts and arms, in commerce and policy. Though not so happy in the selection of subjects as some of their earlier brethren, it cannot

be denied that they have shown research and learning both patient and extensive ; neither will it be questioned, that in simplicity and ease of language, and dramatic liveliness of narrative, they have equalled the elder historians ; yet, at the same time, it must be confessed, that they are inclined to be too gossiping, philosophic, minute, and controversial. Though they have not selected good subjects, it would be unfair to say that such are wanting ; no one has thought of writing of that terrible war which shook the nations of Europe—we have had but some of the episodes ; neither have we had a History of British Literature, of which the poetic portion was commenced by Warton. These omissions are rather a reproach to the nation than to its literary men ; there is no public encouragement, and historians are more willing to follow taste than perish in dictating to it.

JOHN LINGARD

HAS written a History of England, and spared neither research nor learning to render it accurate and enduring. He has other qualities ; his sagacity is only equalled by his eloquence,

and the simple and concise vigour of his language, by the lucid elegance of his arrangement: he wants the happy, unsolicited easiness of Hume, and the picturesque splendour of Gibbon; yet, in effect, he is scarcely inferior; and he has a certain historic dignity of manner united with vivid description. He had already prepared the way for his History, by the ‘Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church,’ and in his ‘Vindication of the Romish Church from the Attacks of Dr. Huntingford, Bishop of Gloucester:’—in the first, there is much research and peculiar erudition, and in the latter, calmness and ability; but in both he gives distinct evidence of his more than sympathy with the fallen fortunes of the power of Rome in this country, and his dislike to the church which supplanted it. The learning and eloquence displayed in these works, and the love which was shown for the ancient church, induced the world to expect from his History of England a clear and equable narrative of events, written in a style at once agreeable and nervous, and displaying on every page industry, learning, and acuteness; showing a spirit which refused to drink at modern wells, but went at once to the fountain head of old intelligences; but with these high expectations

was coupled a fear that the Roman Catholic sympathies of the historian would be more than shown in his allusions to all that concerned the interests or honour of his church ; and without believing that he would forsake the paths of truth, it was dreaded, that in his portraits his colours would be brighter and his expression diviner than candour warranted. In neither of these matters has the world been disappointed.

As volume followed volume of this new history, it was observed, with much regret, that the historian contemplated the growing freedom of the Commons of England with coldness, if not with dislike, and reserved his love and warmth for the struggles which the Churchmen maintained so long and so successfully against their earthly king in favour of their spiritual one. Under the banner of the Pope, he marches boldly to battle, like one who, in such a cause, had a charmed life and a blessed sword : but, under the banner of the King, when displayed against the usurpation of the hierarchy, he steps like a conscript, and looks like one who knew his sword was blunt and his armour not proof. He is ready to aid no one but the clergy in pulling down kings ; and he only does this, that he may raise up a clerical idol in their stead.

The account which he gives of the quarrel of Edwy with Dunstan is more favourable to that turbulent and seditious saint than ancient history warrants; and his narrative of the bloody day of St. Bartholomew may be called an apology for the massacre. Humanity, it is true, whispers a kind-hearted writer to adopt the least outrageous version of a story, surpassing in horror the darkest fictions of tragedy; but the humanity of Lingard is never awakened save when the church bell is rung; and those acquainted with the historians of the time, Catholic as well as Protestant, cannot but feel that he has misinterpreted the essential points, and represented a long-determined-upon deed of atrocity, which swept to a bloody grave at least thirty thousand innocent human beings, as a hasty resolution of the moment, and its martyrs as amounting to no more than ten thousand.

That Lingard should represent the Reformation as hurtful to the glory of the Catholic church cannot be wondered at, seeing that she was crushed in the contest; that he should represent it as unnecessary, is a marvel, and shows singular hardihood of assertion. He has not only done this, but he has endeavoured to prove that the fabric of the Romish church is reared ac-

cording to Scripture, and that the reformed structure stands on a shelving sand. Leaving this to be settled by divines and others conversant with holy writings in the learned tongues, it would not be difficult to prove, from the lips of the Romish hierarchy, that reformation was a necessary thing for the northern part of our island at least. In 1549 a provincial council was held, first in Linlithgow and then in Edinburgh, at which James Hamilton, Archbishop of St. Andrew, presided. There were present one archbishop, six bishops, two vicars-general, ten abbots and priors, three commendators, twenty-seven friars of different orders, besides professors, doctors, and licentiates in theology. This council sat long; its canons are remarkable on many accounts, and particularly for their preamble. It begins with the charge of St. Paul, Acts xx. 28, and then sets forth as the two prime causes of heresy—1, The corruption and profane lewdness of the clergy of almost every degree: 2, Their gross ignorance in all arts and sciences. “Knox himself,” says the accurate Lord Hailes, “could not have said anything more severe. Indeed, the first book of his history is little more than a rude and uncourtly commentary on the two causes of heresy men-

toned in the ecclesiastical canons." Had the Romish church reformed itself, no ruder hand would have meddled with it; the hierarchy, instead of purifying the sacred places, and opening the gospels to the people, that he that ran might read, kindled a fire to burn unbelievers, which consumed themselves.

Nor is this the only charge which has been urged against the historian; his slavish affection for his church has blinded him in matters equally important; he looks with aversion or indifference on the bold struggles made by the people for freedom, and justifies the conduct of that fierce conqueror Edward the First, both in crushing the Welsh and in oppressing the Scotch. With Lingard, and with no one else of these times, the chiefs of Wales are rebels, and the heroes of Scotland traitors. He sees in the homage rendered for the northern counties of England, the submission for the whole of Scotland, and persists in imagining a jurisdiction which never existed, in the face of ten thousand facts. He is afraid to countenance the bold assertion of civil freedom made by the people of Scotland, lest he should have to allow the same privilege in spiritual matters; though if he had reflected that the Pope claimed Scotland as the holder of

the bones of St. Andrew, the historian would have paused perhaps before he conceded so much to one who only claimed through the sword. In truth, Dr. Lingard, with all his research and learning and genius, is but a monk of the fourteenth century as far as respects freedom, civil and religious; he maintains the supremacy which the priest of Rome assumed over all the churches of Europe; he allows the thrones of princes to be justly shaken when papal thunder did it; and he advocates the celibacy of the clergy, though he could not but know, if he did not feel, that nature was like a fox chained up, and when freed, took wild indulgence for a little abstinence. Many, said Dryden, carry their virtue to a convent, and lose it there. The celibacy of ecclesiastics is a superstitious refinement on the law of God and nature; could men have been kept alive without food as well as without marriage, the same refinements would have forbidden eating and drinking. The passions, wild and strong, though restrained for a time, broke through all restraints, and the flagitious lives of the Romish clergy supplied themes for tradition and ballad even to writers of their own faith. "When men become odious, they soon grow contemp-

tible," says Lord Hailes ; " and when the established clergy become contemptible in the eyes of the people, their existence depends upon the State." The professional bigotry of this historian will injure his work in the eyes of posterity.

ROBERT SOUTHEY.

IN vigour and variety of genius Robert Southey has few equals. He ranks in poetry with the foremost ; in criticism none can be named more sensible and accurate ; in biography he is without rivals ; while in history he occupies the first rank, and is on the right hand. His natural talents, as well as his acquirements, belong to the historic order ; the simplicity and dignity of his sentiments and conceptions harmonize wondrously with his almost miraculous command of his mother tongue, and unite gracefully with learning more minute and extensive than has distinguished any historian since the days of Gibbon. The flowing ease and old English grace of his language have induced those who admire measured pomp of words to bring a charge of negligence against him which

will not be entertained for a moment by one who studies his pages ; there, all is simple, clear and harmonious ; there is no tiptoe dignity, nor weak sentiments buckramed up with big words. His three great works, ‘ The History of the Peninsular War,’ his ‘ Book of the Church,’ and ‘ The History of Brazil,’ should be studied by all who desire to know how History is composed ; it was no sudden effort of imagination which raised structures so well proportioned, so beautiful, and so durable.

To ‘ The History of the Peninsular War’ he brought not only an honest heart and clear judgment, and a feeling for whatever is heroic and free, but those powers of combination which reach far and wide, and enable a good historian, like a great general, to expand or gather together his strength, and conduct with ease the masses which he sets in motion. The scientific skill of a commander is visible in all the motions of Southey ; he sees, as with the eye of an eagle from the cloud, the whole Peninsula spread out before him ; he makes himself familiar with its mountains, its vales, its forests, its strengths natural and artificial ; he looks on the people and their condition—weighs the noble against the knave, and then proceeds to relate the for-

tunes of the land in its great contest for freedom with the greatest conqueror of modern times. This history, for accuracy of information, for living pictures of the encounters of the adverse hosts, for pathetic truth of delineation, whether he records the fate of armies, or cities, or individuals, has not yet been equalled. It is true that some Spanish writers have questioned his accuracy, and that some critics at home have charged him with high colouring; that he cannot have the minute knowledge of many important things which native writers possess, and that he should take the part of the oppressed cannot be wondered at, and need not be extenuated. He loves his country, he loves national independence, and has written in the spirit of a free man; in all leading points he is correct;—nay, it is a marvel he is so correct, seeing that he had to gather his knowledge from many sources—had to reconcile the accounts of different parties, and decide between the statements of combatants who stood with wrath in their eyes and blood on their swords. Nor is his history a mere narrative only of martial movements and whirlwind descriptions of battles: it bears evidence of a mind “richly stored with the treasures of Spanish literature—the romantic chronicles, the religious

legends, the wild traditions of Spanish lore, the deep-seated superstitions, the local associations, the ancient and present manners and feelings of the people, are all so familiar to him, that it would seem as if the temptation to dwell on them were irresistible whenever the casual mention of church or convent suggested the legend of its saint, or the scene of modern events recalled the memory of the olden times." The censure indicated in this quotation is praise; these episodes throw sunshine upon the darkness of war; we inhale the fresh air of tradition or legend with delight, when half suffocated with the steams of carnage.

'The Book of the Church' is distinguished by a deep reverence for the gospel, a love for religion, simple and pure as it came from Jesus, and for a dislike, amounting sometimes to loathing, to superstition which seeks to blind, and mislead, and domineer. To this work he came armed with all such lore as the subject required; and it is admitted that his portraits of the churches are exact in all essentials; vigorous without caricature, and minute without meanness. He has, it is true, given offence to many members of the Romish church by the freedom with which he has discussed liberty of con-

science, and the opening of Scripture to English eyes ; nor has he avoided touching the pride of dissenters, by his eulogy on the learning and scriptural dignity of the Church of England. As a Presbyterian myself, I feel nothing offended with a man so sincere and virtuous as Southey, when he maintains that his mother church is the image of Scripture: I am glad to see an advocate so wise, so learned, and so eloquent, rise up in the cause of truth ; and though I feel persuaded that the simplicity of presbyterianism is more according to the Gospels than the gorgeousness of Episcopalianism, I cannot look upon him otherwise than as on a brother, seeing that we differ but in discipline. His difference regarding the Romish Church is another thing: the idols which he desired to see tossed indignantly out of the sanctuary, have been defended as things too divine to be parted with—and so the matter stands.

In unity, diversity, and originality, the ‘History of Brazil’ is the noblest of all the prose works of Southey. The fault which critics have found with it—namely, that it is a record of the movements of savage hordes, and the actions of invaders still more barbarous, is its greatest merit. The description is just ; but the

picture which the historian displays is one of the most vivid, most instructive, and original, in the whole range of our literature. Horde after horde of people, half-savage in manners, but noble in nature, pass in review before us: fine discrimination of character, and a spirit which perceives and paints difference of superstition, of manners, and dispositions, in innumerable communities which, to an ordinary thinker, would seem one people, are the distinguishing features of the work; and to this must be added the change wrought upon them by Christian invaders, who sought to plunder them with one hand, and with the other to establish a superstition among them, in many things as gross and dark as their own. I have heard it said that the work is too long: he who made the remark could not have read it: variety of scene, change of character, romantic incident, and a succession of strange adventures, related in language simple and energetic, can never seem long to any reader who is not equally drowsy of eye and dull of intellect. The fine earnest tone, too, of the historian, shows how deeply he feels his subject; he is, in fact, master of it: he never strains and gasps like one in up-hill work; all is graceful and fluent; he is ever in his strength,

and always at his ease. For some time he has been contemplating the continuation of Warton's 'History of Poetry:' this is a task worthy of him, and to a mind so full as his of easy accomplishment: it is a work, too, which should be patronized by the country. The way of life of Southey is rational and dignified; he resides at Keswick; has a handsome house, a study, and a noble library; he gives a certain number of hours daily to his pen—for when he is in health, the mercury of his genius is always at the right point—and bestows the rest on his family and his friends: he is as hospitable as he is accomplished.

GEORGE CHALMERS AND SHARON TURNER.

GEORGE CHALMERS in his 'Caledonia,' and Sharon Turner in the 'History of the Anglo-Saxons,' have shown an extensive acquaintance with old British lore, and a patience of inquiry unexampled in modern literature. It was the wish of both to exhibit a correct likeness of the people and the country during a period remote and dark; and they have both succeeded so far as it

seems possible for research to reach. In purity and elegance, and clear methodical arrangement, the Englishman is the superior, and his work will probably carry his name to distant times with no little fame as an historian; but in research, accumulation of matter, and all that renders antiquarian labour valuable, Chalmers excels; his language is, however, strange and uncouth, and abounds in burly words, awkward metaphors, overwhelming epithets, and sentences immeasurably long, and as complicated as a Chinese puzzle. Concerning the political and social condition of the Saxon tribes—for they were not one community—the history of Turner is copious and minute: as warriors they were courageous, daring, and inventive; they feared no enemy, and accepted battle as their descendants did at Poitiers and Agincourt, against all odds. When wars and inroads ceased, they laid aside the spear and the sword, and with rude instruments tore, rather than ploughed, the ground, and scattering the corn, saw it rise, without knowing whose hand might reap it. They got a glimmering of Christian light, and civilization followed; schools were established, chronicles were written, poetry was penned; wheat and barley were cultivated;

sheep and oxen appeared in their pastures ; apples and plums in their gardens ; the rude shed became a house : women coveted costly bracelets and necklaces ; and men in youth built castles and fought battles ; in old age they founded churches and made pilgrimages ; in short, their history is that of all savage hordes which have become great nations.

The 'Caledonia' is to the 'Anglo-Saxon History' what Stonehenge is to a carved font in an old cathedral. It is one of the children of Anak. In deep research, and heaping together of matter, the 'Britannia' of Camden fades away before it. A life, and a long and busy one, was almost exclusively devoted to this stupendous work : the author lived to complete it, and no more. The concluding volume is still in manuscript ; and no bookseller has appeared willing to hazard the expense of giving to the world a thousand pages quarto. This is one of those cases in which literature is not its own reward ; and had Chalmers lived in any land under the sun save this, his 'Caledonia' would have been published by the government, and the learned author pensioned. A work of this kind, it is true, is not alluring to the public : few men now—such is the mill-horse labour of life—have

leisure to encounter such a task as a historical and topographical account of a country, measured over a space of two thousand pages; particularly when not enticed by the charms of style, elegance of arrangement, or the sorcery of romantic legends. Nor is Chalmers the only worthy name which the shameless disregard of this country for its true glory has allowed to pine unnoticed and unrewarded. The 'Dictionary of the Scottish Language,' by DR. JAMIESON, is scarcely inferior to the 'Catalonia' in learning, research, and sagacity. His late Majesty allowed the author one hundred a year: this very moderate pension has been discontinued.

SIR JAMES MACKINTOSH.

FEW men have died with a higher reputation for historic talent and eloquence than Sir James Mackintosh. The words which he casually uttered in conversation were remembered to be repeated; his speeches were listened to as oracles which settled the destinies of nations; and his History of England was looked for as a brilliant consummation of all: a work that was to convict Clarendon of folly, and Hume of igno-

rance. There was much about him to raise high expectations: his defence of the French Revolution against the brilliant attack of Burke, was reckoned triumphant, at least by the republicans; abounded in opinions and positions, which reflection and intercourse with the world induced him afterwards to sober and modify. His defence of Pelletier, who was prosecuted for a libel on Napoleon, startled some who had sailed with the stream of his victorious eloquence in the case of Burke: he seemed now desirous to rebuild what he tried before to pull down. His client, he says, "feels with me gratitude to the ruler of empires, that after the wreck of everything else ancient and venerable in Europe—of all established forms and acknowledged principles—of all long subsisting laws and sacred institutions—we are met here administering justice after the manner of our forefathers, in this her ancient sanctuary." Nor was this the worst that he uttered against the Child and Champion of the Revolution. "Viewing this as I do," he continued, "as the first of contests between the greatest power upon earth and the only press which is now free, I cannot help calling upon you to pause before the great earthquake swallow up all the freedom that remains

among men. Every press on the Continent, from Palermo to Hamburgh, is enslaved. One place only remains where the press is free, protected by our government and our patriotism. It is an awfully proud consideration — that venerable fabric raised by our ancestors, still stands unshaken amidst the ruins that surround us." This was looked upon as apostacy by many—it was apostacy in Napoleon, not in Mackintosh: he defended liberty before, and he defended it still.

It is about twenty years ago since he first took his seat in the House of Commons. He soon after gave notice of a motion on the cession of Norway to Sweden; the crush was great to hear him, and the dread of the ministry was not a little, for the fame of his knowledge and eloquence was high. He rose, and discoursed with great fluency; his speech was long, full of historical illustration, and brightened with frequent flashes of eloquence and philosophic speculation: it was somewhat laboured in style, and wanted simple vigour and familiar force: but that was not the worst; it touched on all matters save the matter in hand, and set all nations of the earth right save Norway. No doubt, he pleaded her cause by

inference ; but that sort of refinement is for the few, not for the many ; he had not the art or the power of grappling at once with his subject, and setting it in sunshine. I heard many members mutter "A complete failure," when he concluded his speech.

The hopes of his friends now rested on his promised History ; and when any one inquired what he was about, they were told that he was collecting materials, and digging the foundations of his future structure. One saw him taking notes from the manuscripts in the British Museum ; by another he was found consulting the records of the Commons, or the documents in the State Paper Office ; while, by a third, he was overheard in consultation with Lord Holland, on the meaning of some dubious deed or dark undertaking in the days of William or Anne. All imagined that he was going on with his History, and many hoped for it soon, as the materials for forming it were of no remote date ; he was to commence with the Revolution of 1688, and conclude with the overthrow of Napoleon and the return of peace to Europe. "A work," says Campbell, "which he meant to have been his monument for posterity."

For nearly twenty years his history was in

hand; and yet I know not that a single volume was finished: he penned episodes, he wrote eloquent passages, bright bits, and delineated characters at full length; but he did no more. The two volumes which, in 1830 and 1831, he gave to Lardner's Cyclopædia, are considered to be an expansion of the preface which was to usher in his great undertaking. They bear marks both of talent and research; but there is nothing in them of that high and commanding order, which makes common readers pause, and say a new light has arisen in the land. In truth, the genius of Mackintosh belonged less to history than to oratory; he seemed to want that scientific power of combination, without which the brightest materials of history are but as a glittering mass: he was deficient in that patient but vigorous spirit which broods over scattered and unconnected things, and brings them into order and beauty. He lavished all his splendour upon secondary matters, and had nothing better to say about things of higher concernment. He was too speculative and philosophic: his eloquence wanted simplicity, and his language ease. He could make profound remarks on events which he could not describe, save in language rendered obscure by its lof-

teness. A clear, straightforward, consistent narrative, such as history demands, was a flight beyond him. He was a sayer of splendid things—a man of high talent, of varied attainments, but not an original, or even powerful thinker. Had his genius been of the lion-like kind which his friends represent, it would have raged like a chained demon till it had produced something lofty and noble: genius of the epic order cannot be idle; the power to do is given to the head that conceives; and perhaps no such person ever existed as a “mute, inglorious Milton.” In metaphysics, the name of Mackintosh stands high as well as in oratory.

SIR WALTER SCOTT

WROTE two histories of Scotland: one is of the familiar, fireside sort, the other of a graver character and loftier pretension. The former is the better: it is supposed to be spoken to his grandson, now like himself in the dust; and no narrative, perhaps, was ever written better calculated to charm a youthful listener. It is all life, and chivalry, and romance. In composing it, he perhaps never consulted a single book;

the nine volumes seem the result of an effort of memory alone—all is connected and clear. All that was poetic, spirited, or peculiar in the varied annals of his native land, was, in his wondrous mind, separated from the chaff and dust of other men's compositions, and was produced clear and clean, and endowed with a fervour and a picturesque beauty, of which we have too few examples. The second series of this little History is altogether an enchaining thing: he relates the political and social fortunes of Scotland from the accession of the House of Stuart till the Union, and gives us what we can find nowhere else—namely, the domestic incidents and historic episodes—the signs and the wonders—of which no other historian has taken notice. There is a charm in all this which equals that of his best romances; we read, and, as we go on, we marvel at the folly of other writers, who did not perceive in that century of national incidents, the materials for many fictions, or for history, not unworthy of the Muse presiding over truth. The third series is not quite so interesting, inasmuch as the incidents which it relates are well known—the rebellions of the “fifteen” and the “forty-five” are familiar to us, not

only through history and tradition, but the latter—the romantic one—has been laid before us with all the spirit in which it happened, in the magnificent novel of ‘Waverley.’ Nor is the first series much inferior to the second: the early fortunes of Scotland—particularly under Wallace and Bruce—are related with equal accuracy and spirit. Though all done from memory, he has made but one solitary slip.

The graver history of Scotland which he wrote is much less to my taste: all the life which warms and animates the familiar one is wanting: it is cold, formal—without ease and without dignity. The crushing hand of misfortune was on him at the time; and he seems to have composed it under the dread of some impending calamity. It is true, that it is correct, full of knowledge, and touched every where with that kind and generous spirit, which, in him, was ever active as well as speculative. He feels as a son of the soil, for the dishonour that was done us by the tyranny of the first Edward, and he rejoices as all true Scotsmen do—aye, and true Englishmen also—in the glorious redemption achieved by Wallace and by Bruce. In all this, and much more, Scott is not wanting: still, it is hardly worthy of him,

and cannot be numbered among the productions destined to delight posterity.

The genius of Scott was too excursive to be limited to the exact bounds of history: his language was lively and picturesque, and his inventive powers readily found illustration for the most barren periods: but he wanted the steady and uniform dignity of our latter history, and seemed to possess the spirit of the old chroniclers, who painted all to the eye, and left the mind to shift for itself. He had much of the readiness and poetic perception of Froissart, and more than rivalled that great light of the days of Edward the Third, in the brightness of his descriptions; but his remarks want the philosophic depth of Hume; they are always lively, seldom profound: he saw all he wrote: his fancy was vivid and pictorial—he was the Rubens of literature.

All this, and more, was visible in ‘The Life of Napoleon Bonaparte;’ a work, which, under the banner of biography, assumes the aspect, and performs the functions of history. It is altogether a marvellous book: the narrative is vigorous, picturesque, and flowing: the varied fortunes of the wondrous man, are followed from the cradle to the grave, and we see him a

solitary boy under the trees of the School of Brienne, reading Tasso, or tracing with his finger the lines of siege or battle : he is next presented to us a penniless cadet in the regiment of La Fere, with his thoughts more on literature than war : the scene shifts, and he is busied laying down his profound but simple lines of attack on Toulon, amid the wondering representatives of the people, to whom all is a mystery, till the signal is given and the city falls. We see him not again, but as a wanderer, wishing to enter the army of the Turks, or eating a chance morsel with Talma, till the Sections of Paris rise on the Convention, and he is called, in the moment of peril and dismay, to wave his hand and restore order. His march from school to high command is vividly painted ; nor is his march from Paris to Rome, and from thence to Germany, overturning armies and thrones as he goes, less historic and masterly : in fact, the heart of the writer (and of the reader too) accompanies the all-but beardless conqueror, and sympathizes with all he does ; even his daring invasion of Egypt, his scientific manœuvres, which sweep away as grass with the scythe the magnificent cavalry of the Mamelukes—the turning of his face towards India,

and when repulsed, towards France, where men, scarcely inferior to himself, were preparing his footstool—all enlist our heart or our fancy. Nay, we even aid him in pulling the attorneys out of their seats, and watch with deep interest what he is about to do with the sword or with the pen; nor do we hesitate to say, that we are among those who lose not the image of the republic in the First Consulship, but hope on, and will not persuade ourselves that the hero of so many pitched battles is to ascend the throne of a despot.

We awake from our dream at last; the hero of many hopes “the likeness of a kingly crown has on;” marshals stand around him; he has divorced the wife of his bosom, and married an hereditary princess by contract: he marches east, west, north and south, and victory is with him; but we no longer rejoice in his fame, or clap our hands at his triumphs; he has become the oppressor of nations, and our hearts turn against him; nor do we sympathize any more in his fortunes, till, crushed by a combination of kingdoms, he is driven into exile, and, returning from his work in despair, gathers around him the comrades of a hundred battles—some of whom he had placed on thrones—and is van-

quished in the death-struggle at Waterloo; a battle fought in favour of hereditary right, and fought, as France has lately shown us, in vain.

The narrative of Scott was written when national animosity was unsubsidied, our wounds green, our daughters mourning, and the blood of battle on our swords. The author, too, was an ardent lover of his country, and of the order of things which the genius of Napoleon sought to abolish; he was a maintainer of old birth-right, and an admirer of the far descended; he of whom he wrote, sought to establish the reign of genius; it was his object to bring all the natural talent of the land into action, and he would have succeeded, had he not attempted it by arbitrary means. Yet, with all this difference of education and feeling, Scott is not unjust to the merits of Napoleon: the estimate of his character is fair in the main, and it will be long before a work appears to eclipse its glowing narratives, and give us a more lively or accurate account of that terrible and all-but invincible warrior.

WILLIAM ROSCOE.

OF the historical powers of William Roscoe, critics have spoken sternly as well as kindly. Among the former was Gifford. "The History of Lorenzo de' Medici," he says, "was overrated at its first appearance, but well merits a place in our libraries. What with its classic appearance and valuable information, its English and Italian, its verse and prose, its uniform composition and not rare affectation, its frontispieces and vignettes, its splendour of type and expanse of margin, it may, perhaps, be characterized, as exhibiting somewhat like that union of neatness, pretension, and cheerlessness, which belongs to the modern idea of a cold collation. The second great attempt of our author on Italian history, proved by no means equally successful. Its faults were greater, its virtues less; and by a singular infelicity, though it discovered few tokens of spirit or genius, it could still less lay claim to the praise of correct composition. The historian also, somewhat unnecessarily, and beyond doubt somewhat inauspiciously, embroiled himself, to a certain extent at least, with the

Reformation — a circumstance, however, for which the subsequent discovery of his political tenets may possibly enable us to account; for the reformers of the sixteenth century are in no great favour, we suspect, with those of the eighteenth and nineteenth. Yet the positive delinquencies which deformed the ‘History of Leo the Tenth,’ were protected from observation by the negative fault of dulness. It was screened by clouds of its own raising; and the literary character of Mr. Roscoe still continues to be estimated by his first best performance.” The party spirit which speaks in this extract was counteracted by the praise of the party to which the historian belonged: he that was trodden into the dust by a Tory, as a dull writer, was raised and crowned one of the princes of literature by a Whig: truth was not the object of either. The *Quarterly* and *Edinburgh Reviews* exhibited, on paper, the strife which disgraced the Whigs and Tories in parliament: literature and the dignity of the country suffered by the indecent contest.

The merits of Roscoe as a historian, must be sought for in his works, and neither in the sayings of his friends nor of his enemies. He was one of the first who made us intimately ac-

quainted with the later princes and taste and talent of Italy : before this, we looked upon Rome, and all who sat in the papal chair, with distrust, if not with fear ; and we could scarcely persuade ourselves that the Priest-king of the Vatican might be a person of lofty feelings and fine taste, and who loved mankind. It is true, that, to accomplished scholars and travelled men, Roscoe had not much to tell that was new ; but he connected the scattered intelligence with a diligent hand, and wrought it into the historical form in a very graceful and pleasing manner. The image which he gives us of the papal power during the brilliant days of the Medici, is a very characteristic one—and one, too, that will be long liked, though it is neither very vigorous, nor of the epic order. His principal fault is want of original force of thought ; he never surprises us with ideas either high or profound ; his eye sees but a little way and loves the ground ; he is ever equal, ever tranquil, and neither rises nor falls. He discusses the merits of a medal in the same quiet, gentle way that he discourses of the awakening energies of the Reformation. The coming light of that great change is looked on with tranquillity, though it threw its rays into the dungeons of St. Angelo,

and deprived Leo of some of his fairest kingdoms. Nor is the language in which all this is expressed of a very original kind: it is harmonious and elegant, and seldom obscure; but it wants the fine free English tone—the natural ease and happy carelessness of one more solicitous about his sentiments than his words. It shows much taste, and but little nature—some classic refinement, with a good deal of labour. In short, his style is more remarkable for neatness than force—for being “Florentine and slender,” rather than weighty and colossal.

The influence which Roscoe exercised was not confined to Liverpool. His name was carried over the world on the wings of history and philanthropy; the historian of Leo the Tenth was eloquent and zealous in the removal of that dark spot, the Slave Trade, from the otherwise white robe of Britain. He also sympathized deeply in the fortunes of the family of Burns, and upbraided Scotland, in a poem of considerable power, for her unkind conduct to her most gifted son;—nay, so far did he carry this feeling, that he contemplated a new Memoir of the poet, in which the ungenerous and ungentle behaviour of the northern nobles was to be emblazoned in the language of indignant anger.

He wrote a small portion of the Memoir, and, probably not much liking what he had done, abandoned the subject for ever. I have seen the little that he did, and cannot commend it. The style was laboured and ornate. The poetical talents of Roscoe have been praised by no mean judges. His verses are very fair specimens of that kind of poetry, the excellence of which consists less in strength of wing, than in beauty of plume and lightness of movement. His song is flowing and harmonious rather than energetic. He was one of the kindest and most generous of mankind: his house and his purse were opened to all the children of genius; nor were they shut so long as fortune left the owner aught to bestow. He was of humble origin, and self-educated: nor were his studies confined to literature alone; he was an excellent judge of painting; the friend, and for some time the patron, of Fuseli: in medals, likewise, he was a connoisseur, and extended his studies to all that was polite and elegant.

SIR JOHN MALCOLM.

The life of Sir John Malcolm is as interesting as his histories ; and they are learned, dramatic, and eloquent. He went out when a boy to India, and soon became remarkable for his acquirements in native lore, and in the business of war and government : he rose in rank by seniority ; but he was widely known, when only in the rank of lieutenant, for knowledge of all kinds, a ready and an agreeable way of communicating it, as well as for presence of mind and daring courage. He was ever ready either to study or to strike. Talents such as these soon carry the owner to distinction in India : he was widely employed in war and in negotiation, and acquitted himself in both in a manner that won on enemies as well as friends. During his marches and embassies he acquired such intimate knowledge of the manners, feelings, and character of the people of Hindostan and Persia, that he was enabled to write those histories which will make him known to posterity. For success as a historian, he was much indebted to that spirit of observation and remark which

accompanied him from his youth up. He was no sooner in India than he was struck with the traditions and customs of the natives, and reading in these the history of the people, he set about collecting them with unremitting assiduity. His practice was to carry a note-book with him, and pencil down the name of the person who related the story, the place where, and the time when, he heard it; and in this way he amassed sixty or seventy volumes of individual or national anecdote.

In his 'History of Persia' he made a sensible use of materials of that nature: he thus pleads for the traditionary marvels of his introductory chapters: "If we desire to be fully informed of a nation's history, we must not reject the fables under which the few traces that remain of its origin are concealed. These, however extravagant, always merit attention. They have an influence on the character of the people to whom they relate. They mix with their habits, their literature, and sometimes with their religion. They become, in short, national legends, which it is sacrilege to doubt; and to question them would raise in the breast of a Persian all those feelings which would be excited in that of an Englishman, if he heard a foreigner detract

from the great name of Alfred. Such heroes often rise in importance—as far as their example is of value—in proportion as their real history is lost in obscurity; they are adopted as models by the painters and poets of their country; every human virtue is ascribed to them; and men are taught their duty from fables decorated with names, which they have learned to venerate from their cradle, and the love of which is cherished with all the enthusiasm of national pride.” The accuracy of these remarks must be evident to all who are acquainted with history; they apply to all nations; and the legends of Arthur and his knights in the south, and of Wallace and his companions in the north, cannot but recur to British readers.

This has given an original air and a chivalrous spirit to the works of Malcolm, which render them so acceptable to all who desire to become acquainted with the fortunes of Persia or of Hindostan. He wrote many of his descriptions in vales, or on the hills, where the battles were fought or negotiations concluded; and he visited in person all the remarkable places in Hindostan, of which his ‘History of Central India’ required him to speak. Of the social natures and domestic habits of the people

he speaks from observation. He relates many anecdotes of their warriors; quotes many verses of their poets; and he is pleased when he can give a pithy saying from the lips of their native princes. It is this which renders those histories among the most readable books of the language. Nor has he neglected the doctrines and ceremonies of religion; the mystic and poetic absurdities of the sect of Saafis—in short, all that he considered characteristic or national he has exhibited in his pages. In his ‘Persian Sketches’ he has admitted much which he could not admit into his graver history—these consist chiefly of legends, ceremonies, and scenes: they are all stamped with the impress of the East, and are worth ten thousand of those stories which it was once the practice to manufacture for home consumption, under the name of Eastern Tales. ‘The Political History’ is less addressed to the general reader, and may be described as learned and liberal: it has been often referred to by men well acquainted with Eastern affairs.

The works of Sir John Malcolm are less the offspring of study than of observation: he had seen much, and he has told much. He had a quick eye and a ready understanding, a pictu-

resque skill, and a spirit equally dramatic as historic. His language hovers between the elaborate and the natural, not wholly of the one nor of the other, and yet partaking of the character of both. His reasoning is generally correct, and his thoughts, though not profound, spring naturally out of the narrative, and are not stuck upon it for display. He has much of the sensibility as well as fancy of a poet, and some of the scenes in his history of both Persia and India, are almost fit for representation. In conversation, he abounded in anecdote; his happy gaiety of nature and kindness of heart, made his company always acceptable: he could pass readily from the comic to the sad, and from the sad to the comic, and pause in the midst of hearty laughter, and give advice equally wholesome and serious.

COLONEL NAPIER.

A History of the Six Years War, in which the cause of Europe was contested in the Spanish Peninsula, has been written, as I have related, by Southey, with so much care, truth, and talent, that nothing seemed left for a new adven-

turer, but to glean where the other had reaped, and tell the individual fortunes of peasant warriors whose deeds had been overlooked. A history by a skilful soldier, who was intimate with the manœuvres and combinations of modern war; who had been present in the principal battles; was well acquainted with the far extended scene of strife, and who had associated with the leaders on both sides, was not expected or hoped for, when such appeared from the pen of Colonel Napier. Failure, instead of brilliant success, was presumed by many when the work was announced: the hard, rude outlines of the contest were alone expected from the pen of a soldier, with endless marches and counter-marches, and a full return of killed and wounded—with all the powder which had been burnt, and all the balls fired in the trench or in the field. Instead of this, one of the most remarkable books of modern times was the result. The style is concise, clear, and energetic; the narrative vehement and rapid; the looks and motions, and discipline of the contending armies, are given as distinct as in a picture: the generals and leaders are exhibited as in life—here slow and undecided—there prompt and fiery, and all the varied fortunes of the fight, from the mo-

ment the squadrons are precipitated into battle till the victory is decided, are delineated with a burning energy, unknown to the calmer pages of ordinary historians. The historic picture which he exhibits, seems deficient in nothing; there are stern, but there are also tender parts; he is a Briton, and a true one, but he is not unjust to the valour or the military skill of his antagonists; nor is his eye confined to the details of campaigns, and the vicissitudes of battle; he describes the social condition of the people, and paints their feelings and their manners, in a lively and forcible way.

The man and the soldier are stamped on every page; while it is quite certain that no one but a clear-sighted soldier could have penned such a work, it is equally sure that his heart is warm, and his sympathies alive. He does not look upon war as a wondrous development of science alone, in which the blood of thousands is spilled, to vindicate a mathematical manœuvre or support a scientific demonstration; men, he regards as something better than food for the cannon; and the earth is to him lovely, for its produce, and its woods and streams, rather than for affording capital soil for entrenchments, and fine plains for evolutions of cavalry. In the

same train of feeling, he surveys the variety of skill which the war brought into action, and, like a true son of genius, decides in favour of the service which gives free room for talents to rise, and in which the chief leaders have been called from all degrees and ranks of life. In this decision, he recognizes the great principle of nature, and condemns those distinctions which have grown up in the earth, usurping the high places on which nature intended that talent should stand. This boldness has given offence to many; for, no doubt, it strikes at the root of aristocratic influence, and proclaims the unwelcome truth, that God bestows genius without regard to the blind and artificial distinctions invented by man. It was impossible, however, if he reasoned at all, to come to any other conclusion: the Napoleon or the Soult—or, to speak more correctly, the Bernadotte or the Lasnes of a British regiment, would have risen by bravery and good conduct to the rank of serjeant, and stood there with the halbert in their hands, looking at the high-born and the wealthy climbing—nay, rising on wings into command, who had not a tithe of their talents. All this could not be otherwise than disagreeable to a man who seeks distinction from genius.

alone, and who feels, that under the shade of the old aristocracy, Napoleon could never have risen higher than a Colonel of Artillery.

He has likewise, it seems, given offence to the people of Spain. This could not well be otherwise: he speaks too frankly and boldly, not to give pain to many. It is not a pleasant thing for a Spaniard to be told, that, unable to fight the battle of his own independence, he was obliged to seek others to fight it for him; and to a bigoted Catholic, deliverance by the sword of a heretic could not be acceptable, word the deed as gently as the historian might. Nor was it much to the delight of the warriors of Britain, when, after repulsing the French from the Peninsula, they embarked for their native land, to hear wafted by the winds which filled their sails, the voice of general thanksgiving for the blessed departure of the heretics. In fact, the task which the historian imposed on himself, was the vindication of his fellow soldiers from the aspersions of Spanish writers, "who have," he says, "boldly asserted, and the world has believed, that the deliverance of the Peninsula was the work of their hands. From the moment that an English force took the field, the Spaniards ceased to act as prin-

cipals, in a contest carried on in the heart of their country, and involving their existence as an independent nation: they were self-sufficient, and their pride was wounded by insult; they were superstitious, and their religious feelings were roused to fury by an all-powerful clergy, who feared to lose their rich endowments." In short, they cannot be said to have entered heartily into the scheme of their own deliverance; they hated both the French and the English—they destroyed the former whenever they could do so safely; and they injured for a long while the latter, by the promises of supplies and co-operation, which were not forthcoming in the hour of trial. The soldiers of England brought home a hearty hatred of the Spaniards, from the war of the Peninsula, and Napier writes strongly from strong impressions. He has, perhaps, expressed this a little too impetuously: but he has everywhere spoken like a free and honest soldier, and produced a work which for vivid beauty of narrative may vie, I have heard good judges say, with Cæsar or Tacitus.

HENRY HALLAM.

The 'State of Europe during the Middle Ages,' and 'The Constitutional History of England,' are works by which the name of Henry Hallam will be known to posterity. Of the former, it has been said, that the plan is more extensive than that laid down by Dr. Robertson, its arrangement more strictly historical, its views more comprehensive, and its information more copious and critical; and of the latter, it is remarked, that no work of these our latter days can equal it for strict impartiality; that it is eminently judicial; that its whole spirit is of the bench, not of the bar; and that he states the case with candour, and, in summing up, looks neither to the right nor to the left—glossing over nothing, nor exaggerating nothing. This is high praise. That he has executed his designs with learning and ability, seems admitted by all who are masters of the matter of which he treats; and though his style is charged with being occasionally harsh or obscure, it is felt to be massive and vigorous, and not without a certain grave and impressive eloquence; while a

spirit of freedom and liberality is breathed over the whole performance.

The 'State of Europe during the Middle Ages,' is full of information for all who desire to be informed of the political and social condition of those kingdoms and states which arose out of the ruins and ashes of the empire of Rome. To show order emerging from confusion, the decisions of law taking place of those of passion and violence, and a line of defence raised to protect the weak and the peaceable against the strong and the tyrannous, was the task which Hallam assigned to himself; and he has accomplished all he undertook. 'The Constitutional History of England' seems a less necessary work; to separate the ingredients of a nation's history, that an author may show his skill in the distribution, and be enabled to serve us up constitutional, martial, and domestic courses of our national story, shows, at least, a questionable taste. It is like writing the history of the left hand, and neglecting that of the right: our achievements in establishing our present constitution, are interwoven too closely with the broad web of our whole history, to be separated advantageously.

The dawn of liberty in Scotland is mingled with the light of burning towns, and is part of that supernatural radiance which Bruce saw when he returned from exile to assert the independence of his country. Its fuller light shone on the ranks of the Roundheads, when, inspired by liberty, they overthrew Charles and his chivalry. In truth, constitutional freedom and deeds of daring, both in the cabinet and in the field, go hand in hand; and to give us the constitutional portion, is to tear history asunder, and present us with one of the bleeding members. We have not yet obtained a right history of Britain—a history addressed both to the eye and the understanding; one gives us a historical romance, another a philosophic disquisition, while a third looks on all through the contracted aperture of religious bigotry. I know not that Henry Hallam is equal to such an undertaking, but no one could approach it with a better spirit or more extensive learning.

ISAAC D'ISRAELI.

IN placing Isaac d'Israeli among historians, I know not that I am right; he is, however, a great writer of some kind, and all his productions are of a historic character. He is one of the most learned, intelligent, lively, and agreeable authors of our era; he has composed a series of works, which, while they shed abundance of light on the character and condition of literary men, and show us the state of genius in this land, have all the attractions for general readers of the best romances. He has a quick eye for finding rich materials in barren places; he will detect an anecdote, which gives the key to some mysterious matter in literature, in the crumpled corner of a mildewed parchment; or, from a pencil note on the margin of some forgotten book, supply the world with matter for a month's talk, on the folly or the wisdom of men of genius. No one need think of writing the lives of our poets and historians, without borrowing light from his pages; and whoever continues Warton, will find that D'Israeli has prepared the way. His 'Commentaries on the Life and Reign of Charles the

First, exhibit all the research, the learning, and sometimes more than the animation of his earlier works. That he has executed this very difficult task in the spirit of philosophy and candour, has been questioned by some, and, indeed, it could not well be otherwise. There are men in our land, who never look on Charles otherwise than as an odious and perjured tyrant, and on those who shed his blood, as the upright and the pure. The Presbyterians of his time seem to have had the truest notion of things; they did not desire to destroy, nor even dethrone Charles; their object was to establish a constitution restraining both king and people within the bounds of moderation and justice; but this suited neither the Cavaliers nor the Independents. I see it intimated, that D'Israeli has the History of British Literature in contemplation; he cannot do a more acceptable service to the republic of letters, than write it.

BIOGRAPHY.

THE penury of British biography was remarked by Johnson; he did much, indeed, to remove the reproach, and succeeding writers added largely to the structure which he may be said to have commenced. We had, before his day, individual biographies, such as Sprat's 'Life of Cowley,' and Cibber's 'Apology,' remarkable for elegance of eulogium and liveliness of detail, but we had no connected series of Lives before those of the Poets, and even in these, some of the greatest poets England has produced, are omitted. It was the object of Johnson to exhibit the genius as well as the persons of the poets; to give us their mental picture along with their bodily, and I know of no writer who has equalled him. He knew it was by their intellect that they had purchased the distinction of biography; succeeding biographers, and among them Boswell, have thought differently; we have diaries rather than memoirs, and letters substituted for characters. The importance of the individual in

the eyes of the world, has not at all been attended to; instead of forty pages, we have four hundred, and instead of a hundred, a thousand. Men about whom the world had no solicitude, have come into the market with their "Life and Times," and we have been deluged with accounts of writings that were never read, and of books published but to be forgotten. Boswell's 'Life of Johnson' led to these inflictions; but then, Johnson was long at the head of our literature—was for many years the "Triton of the minnows," and renowned besides, over the civilized world, for the wit and wisdom of his sayings. It is not that he said lively and witty things, but that he said wise ones also, that we peruse the minute account of his biographer with a pleasure which never tires. The great beauty of the Memoir of Johnson is, that the sage is recalled to life, placed at our side, and we are made to see as well as hear him—not scattering his pearls in solitude, but surrounded by the choice spirits of his day—Burke, Reynolds, Percy, Goldsmith. The chief fault of the performance is, that it wants the splendid summary, and final judgment of character, which forms the crowning glory to the 'Lives of the Poets.' We are left to draw our own conclusions from the anecdotes and indications of Boswell,

and the consequence is, that every one forms a mental character according to his abilities or prejudices, and nothing is fixed or defined.

JAMES CURRIE.

‘THE Life of Burns,’ by James Currie, followed that of Johnson; this was a labour of love and of charity. The great poet had died in poverty, his children were left without bread, and no one appeared to befriend them, save the good and generous Currie, who undertook the task of arranging the disordered papers, preparing a Life of the Poet, and giving the whole to the world, with the hope that the profits would save a deserving woman and her fatherless children from the uncertain charity of their country. In this he was not disappointed. The memory of Burns owes much to his biographer; everywhere, a deep sympathy is confessed for his hard fortune: his life is delineated with considerable skill, and his character as a poet is such as the world has sanctioned. To do all this, required some resolution; the fame of Burns was but in its infancy—the world had not made up its mind on his merits; many, like Mrs. Bar-

bauld, classed him with the inspired Pipe-maker of Bristol; and few, perhaps, imagined that the homely verses of the glorious peasant were to take a high place among the poetry of Britain. Nor was this all: the learned and the ingenious—

Far seen in Greek, deep men of letters—

could not but dislike to be told that a flash of nature's fire was worth a whole Vauxhall Garden of artificial lights; and they were unwilling to believe, but that the way to Parnassus, like that to the Law and the Church, lay through a college: the poet too had been imprudent as a politician, opinions such as he entertained were little cherished in those days; and the Hayleys and the Peter Pindars were not likely to be pleased with his being elevated a head and shoulders higher than themselves—in short, there was much to hinder and little to encourage Currie in doing justice to his genius, and placing him where nature had intended. His biographer was no timid man, and yet he seems to have had his misgivings; there is something like a tone of apology throughout the Life, as if he were suspicious that good society would resent the introduction of the inspired and audacious peasant among them.

As a compact and regular memoir, the work is a failure, for it is made up of many parts, and consists of four or five narratives from different hands, which, though confirmatory of each other, occasion ungraceful repetitions. The charm lies in the perfect sincerity, fine sensibility, and easy style of the whole composition. It is accompanied too by a dissertation on the character and condition of the Scottish peasantry, which shows an intimate knowledge and love of the subject, and that Currie himself had in his youth practised much of what he describes. Nocturnal love excursions; adventures at kirk suppers and house heatings, and the effect of music upon the laborious peasantry, are all described with an ardour and a feeling which could not come through the cold medium of hearsay. This excellent man died much too soon for his country; he had risen to high fame as a physician; had distinguished himself by his writings—and still more by his edition of Burns—a gift, and a noble one, to the poet's widow and children—when he was cut off in the forty-eighth year of his age.

WILLIAM HAYLEY.

THE name of William Hayley is numbered with the biographers of the age; he is the author of a 'Life of Romney,' and of the 'Life of Cowper.' For the first, he collected materials from the lips of the painter, and was farther stimulated by a present of pictures; and, for the second, he had at his disposal the numerous and admirable letters of the poet, in which the secluded man tells his own simple story, and speaks so much of himself, as to leave little for his biographer to communicate. Yet, it cannot be said that Hayley has written anything like permanent works; much of what he relates of Romney has been contradicted or questioned by his son; he takes higher ground, too, than the painter's genius can maintain. The Life of Cowper is only relieved from unelevated mediocrity, by the fine letters with which the narrative is embellished. The biographer seems not to feel the peculiar genius of his subject; his language is formal, measured, and cold, and it has that laboured look, which, though according to the rules of composition, wants familiarity and free-

dom, to interest and warm. There is a sort of Spitzbergen air breathed over the narrative, and yet it is written by one whose talents the world thought highly of, and to whose opinion in all things painters and poets bowed. All this is easily explained: he lived in days when polish held the place of vigour, and harmony that of feeling; and poetry was judged as a song is now, by the sweetness of its music. In all the externals of verse, he was a master; as he moved in good society, his opinions spread and prevailed; and though he penned cold quartos both in prose and verse, no one imagined that the weariness they felt in perusal, could come from the accomplished author of 'The Triumphs of Temper.'

WILLIAM GIFFORD

WROTE a short account of his own eventful life, and a 'Memoir of Ben Jonson;' the former accompanies a translation of Juvenal, and the latter an admirable edition of the works of the dramatist. What he relates of himself, is without the ostentation which disgusts us sometimes in men who have risen from a humble condition;

there is no showing of rags and ailments to excite commiseration, nor a parade of early ignorance, to make us marvel at the wisdom of manhood; all is easy, simple, and sincere. The Life of Ben Jonson is remarkable for its old English lore; for sagacity of criticism, and skill in detecting faults in others, and excellence in the works of his hero; nay, it is, with all its blemishes, an acceptable addition to our biography, and cannot be read without admiration of the tact displayed in the detection of manifold errors, in those who have written about or alluded to Jonson or his dramas. But it is a controversy rather than a memoir: to be sensitive about the genius and the personal merits of the poet, is right and proper, and to vindicate his memory was a duty: but Gifford is much more than that; he is the rude and fierce assailant of all, living or dead, who stand in the path over which he conducts his narrative; he imputes malice to one, envy to another, and ignorance to a third, hob nob, and at random. He has endeavoured to show that the epithet "surly," which was bestowed on his hero, ought to be exchanged for the word gentle—that Ben had no intention of alluding to Inigo Jones in his plays, though he has introduced him, ticketed

and labelled, like one of the Allegories of Rubens; and he labours hard to remove the unfavourable impressions which the memoranda of his conversations with Drummond of Hawthornden have made on the world. Much of what he attempted, he has not been able to do; he has, however, established his own fame as a ready, a learned, a sarcastic, and energetic writer.

WILLIAM GODWIN.

OF the biographical labours of William Godwin I am unable to give an account at all satisfactory to myself. In his 'Life of Mary Wolstonecroft' he has written little and said much; and in his account of Chaucer, he has written much and said little. Of the former, it has been his pleasure to relate more than what he is now perhaps willing to read: the picture which he gives us of the weakness and the strength of that remarkable woman is of the life size, minute in the details, and, like the portraits of Rembrandt, vividly bright, amid a vast deal of darkness. He lays down the principles of his singular philosophy with much plainness, and

describes the way in which his wife fulfilled them, with consummate *naïveté*. He has sacrificed his fine genius too much to false gods. In his 'Life of Chaucer' he has written a romance: all that can be related with certainty of the father of English poetry is, that he lived in the days of Edward the Third, wrote his inimitable poems, and died; some go so far as to surmise that he beat a friar in Fleet-street, and, of course, was otherwise than in the good graces of the church. It has been said that a spoonful of truth will colour an ocean of fiction; and so it is seen in Godwin's 'Life of Chaucer:' he heaps conjecture upon conjecture—dream upon dream—theory upon theory; scatters learning all around, and shows everywhere a deep sense of the merits of the poet; yet all that he has related might have been told in a twentieth part of the space which he has taken. His remarks are sagacious, his knowledge extensive, and when he has a straightforward tale to tell, he acquits himself like the author of 'Caleb Williams.'

MALCOLM LAING

Is the author of a new kind of biography: other writers usually desire to honour the persons of whom they treat; they consider it their duty to vindicate where they are aspersed—to glorify the genius round which they are entwining their own. Laing is a biographer of another fashion: he singles out a man of genius to pluck the laurel from his brow, and then point him out for the contempt of mankind. I allude to his *Life and Works of James Macpherson*. The world saw with surprise a splendid edition of the *Poems of Ossian*, and a long and elaborate *Life of the Translator*—the aim and scope of which was to prove that Ossian was a shadow—a wreath of mist on Cromla; and that Macpherson was a forger—a person

Abhorred of men, and dreadful even to gods.

Had Macpherson forged a fifty-pound note, and got the cash from Laing, he could not have been treated more unworthily: he is looked

upon as a highland Catheran, who has made a descent on the Lowlands, and marched away with much "bestial." In truth, though the practice is not to be commended, he cheated none but antiquarians; to the bulk of mankind it was a matter of no moment, whether the poems sprung from old times or from new: the pictures they contained and the sentiments they expressed were of an original order of poetry; and though the hue-and-cry raised against them by men of genius in England was not little, they forced their way into general notice, and were received with much rapture all over Germany. That Laing has acquitted himself cleverly in the merciless task he undertook, has never been questioned; but he discovered resemblances where they did not exist, and detected imitations with an ingenuity which defeated its own purpose. It is yet a question how much of these works belong to antiquity: the names, many of the actions, and some of the composition, have been proved of old date.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

THE biographical works of Sir Walter Scott are among the most readable things in the language: he has a hearty love for every character he draws, and sympathizes in every life he writes. I know not that his narratives have the unity and consistence which may be observed, for instance, in Southey's 'Nelson,' but they have passages and chapters of uncommon vivacity and brightness: the life of the individual is shown with all its light and shade, and the gauge of his mind is given with remarkable accuracy. The Lives of Dryden and of Swift are not equal to his brief and happy sketches of the Novelists: the narratives are too long and too minute. The merits, however, of Dryden are of so high a kind, both in verse and prose, that particularity may be pardoned: he was among the first to lay down critical rules for dramatic composition; and there is a manly vigour and reach in his prefatory dissertations, which have been equalled, but not surpassed; to give us the history, therefore, of his varied works, was to read us a bright chapter on our

literature;—not so with Swift: the writings of that fine wit are almost all on temporary and passing topics: he had a personal aim in all he wrote; he desired to humble others, if not to exalt himself; and consequently his fame suffered as the matters of which he treated were forgotten. It may be said, and with truth, that his writings on that very account required to be redeemed from the obscurity in which some of them are beginning to be involved: my meaning is, that the extent of a memoir should be in proportion to the fame of the author; and in this respect Swift cannot be compared to Dryden. In truth, the writings of Johnson had embalmed them both, and little more, save notes to their works, was required.

It was otherwise with the Novelists: the characters of Smollett, Fielding, and Richardson, had not, like those of Dryden and Swift, been drawn by the hand of a master: we only knew the men through their works—an imperfect way of obtaining knowledge. We see them now as they were in life; not coarser, or less delicate than the age in which they lived, but reflecting the manners, and feelings, and language of their day, in a mirror true and clear. Their merits are set in a fair light; and though

I think, for variety and invention, Smollett far excelled his companions, there is little can be added to the characters which Scott has depicted. He extracts, as it were, the square root of their talents, and gives us the result; we have the pith and essence in small space: like Dryden's estimate of Shakspeare, nothing is wanting of the magnificent or the minute: other writers may expand, but they cannot improve; they may use more words, but they can add nothing to the sentiment. His intimate knowledge of the art in which these three excelled, enabled him to accomplish this without any effort; he never labours or strains; he is always master of his subject; and when he has given the leading features, and added a few strong and few delicate touches, he leaves us to admire the vivid image, and hastens to a new undertaking, to perform the same wonders.

This is to see him in his happiest moods: he is fond of disquisitions, and speaks not always to the point; he makes occasional mistakes; and he can be minute till he becomes tedious. He wants the critical sagacity of Johnson, and the exquisite purity of language of Southey; but he is equal to either in frequent and happy touches, in lucid and picturesque narrative, and in the

right estimate of genius and summary of character. His Account of the Novelists is worthy of being classed with the Lives of the Poets.

ROBERT SOUTHEY.

THE most perfect piece of biography in the language is the 'Life of Nelson,' by Robert Southey: it is as complete and well-proportioned as the finest statue; all is handsome, graceful, and expressive; there are no parts weak and languid, and none more colossal and massive than strict harmony allows. Those who wish to excel in biography would act wisely in studying this noble work: they will see with what wonderful, and all but invisible art, it is composed, and yet feel that all is so simple, so easy, and so natural, that art is out of the question. In the conception of the Memoir, the author has, like a skilful gardener who inoculates a barren bough with a bearing bud, brought collateral matter to give life to the duller or less interesting parts; nor has he, out of a false love for his hero, painted his character in the Sir Charles Grandison style of perfection; he has spoken of the failings of the man with de-

served compassion, and of the nobleness of his nature with merited rapture. The 'Life of Wesley' is scarcely inferior in interest; for he was an ardent man with great moral courage, presence of mind, and unfailing eloquence. His adventures in propagating the Gospel—for his labours deserve the description—among the illiterate swarms in country and town, have all the interest of romance: he had the profane to silence and sooth, the sluggish to animate and inspire, the giddy to sober, and the profligate to reclaim. That he undertook much, and accomplished much, in the cause of religion, is well known; and those, and they cannot be many, who happen to be ignorant of it, will enlighten themselves and gain a happy day by reading the account of the biographer. The 'Memoir of John Bunyan,' as well as that of Kirke White, is another beautiful narrative; the inspired tinker is drawn with all the life and simplicity of one of the characters in his inimitable 'Pilgrim's Progress.' Southey is now engaged on the Lives of the British Admirals—a task worthy of his genius.

JOHN GIBSON LOCKHART.

Several lives have been written of Burns the poet: that of John Gibson Lockhart is the last and best. He has felt better than any one the fresh and natural energy, the manly breadth, and free, unsophisticated character of his hero. He has sympathized largely with him; he has comprehended his condition, and mastered his peculiarities. He has not stood on his own hill retired, and looked at the rustic bard through the false medium of position; he has descended into the valley, and accompanied him to the plough, the dance, and the "cannie hour at e'en," and has felt and enjoyed all. It is this which has enabled him to lighten those darker hues of character, which give a gloom to the narratives of less considerate biographers, and show the poet standing on his own feet like a man, erect and dignified, conscious of his powers and of his title to immortality.

PATRICK FRASER TYTLER

HAS added largely to our national biography: the 'Lives of the Scottish Worthies' are distinguished by great candour and no common research; he has estimated the military talents of one, and the poetic genius of another, with nice discrimination. He has an earnestness of manner which wins on the most inattentive reader. It is true, that he curtailed Scotland of her fair proportion of worthies; we have a hundred as good as those of whom he wrote; and he would do well to complete his task before he continues his invasion upon the Lives of the Worthies of the South. His 'Life of Raleigh' is full and satisfactory: he went about this undertaking in a true spirit; having mastered the materials, he fixed his abode on the sea coast, where Raleigh was born and brought up; then refreshed his eyes with hill and sea, and warmed his mind with contemplation, and so proceeded to pen the Memoir. This has imparted a freshness of look to the old materials used, and an energy to the new.

LEIGH HUNT.

I KNOW of no biography from which I have derived more pleasure than an account of himself and his family, appended by Leigh Hunt, to his 'Life of Byron.' It is full of life and fine humanities: the gossip is the most agreeable gossip in the world; the writer is on fair terms with himself—and I see no reason he has to be otherwise: the egotism is all *naïveté*; nor is it unmingled with snatches of right feeling and bits of true criticism: save the 'Apology' of Cibber, I know of nothing better. His account of Byron the world resented as an indignity offered to one whom it had itself too much insulted: we were in a fit of repentance, and reparation was the cry; it was no proof of good taste in Hunt to come out with his recollections of the mighty poet so soon after his death; nor was it perhaps right in him at all to speak so openly of the conduct of one who had laid him under a pecuniary obligation. But he seems not to have erred much in matters of fact.

JOHN GALT.

OF the same great poet another Memoir was written by John Galt, who had already shown some biographical skill in his account of Benjamin West. His familiar intercourse with the painter enabled him to give peculiar interest to his account of his early aspirations; and his meeting with the poet amid the scenes of his glory, lent the charm of reality to his narrative, which was widely felt by the world. For this Memoir Galt obtained high praise, and very sharp censure. He in a great measure merited all the praise; he spoke with much manliness and freedom; his details were picturesque, and his remarks generally just and candid—he did not deserve a tithe of the censure poured upon him both in verse and prose. The life of Lord Byron was free to the pens of all men: no one could urge a particular claim to the exclusion of others; and if merit constituted a claim, surely the author of the ‘Annals of the Parish,’ and ‘The Provost,’ stood high enough to entitle his name to be mentioned with reverence. He was, however, treated with very little ce-

remony : he was first of all lampooned for presuming to intimate his intention of writing a life ; and secondly, he was passed beneath “ the saws and harrows ” of criticism, when the work made its appearance. Comparing the statements which the Life contained with the facts detailed in the authentic narrative which followed, Galt will be found less frequently wrong than the critics have intimated. Little has been since revealed, even by his most steadfast friend and admirer, to elevate the character of Byron as a man. Galt has lately given to the world his Autobiography : it contains much that is valuable and curious, and is remarkable for a certain sincere homeliness of language.

THOMAS MOORE

HAS written three different biographies—all unlike each other in manner as well as matter. The first is the ‘Life of Sheridan’ — a work displaying eloquence and spirit, with a certain dash of boldness, which made it acceptable to all who loved free utterance of feeling. It abounds, too, in happy expressions ; in sentiments in which nature is almost smothered

with ornament; and in critical opinions, most of which came from the heart. Its fault lies in claiming too high a station among the sons of the morning for Sheridan, who had a vast deal of the artificial about his genius: he made his scenes for his wit, and not his wit for his scenes; his best things hang on the dialogue like jewels upon an image; his wit does not circulate through it, and belong to it as blood to the body. The language of the Memoir is highly embellished; nothing can less resemble the simplicity of Southey's 'Nelson' than Moore's 'Sheridan.'

The 'Life of Byron,' which followed, showed a complete change of taste in composition: figures of speech were used sparingly; the ornamental was almost utterly discarded; liveliness was repressed, and all was made grave, and simple, and even severe. The new attire in which the Muse of biography appeared, was pronounced by many beautiful and becoming. To all, however, it was not so welcome. Simplicity of language requires the frequent recurrence of massive vigour of sentiment; his former richness—nay, gaudiness of language, concealed ordinary thoughts; and the new style of the writer was in the eyes of many like a fruit tree robbed

of its fruit, or a crown despoiled of its jewels. Nor was this all: Byron had penned memoranda of all he thought or did; and as much that he thought and did was not worthy of being known, a judicious biographer, out of respect to the world as well as for the sake of the poet, should have interpreted him through his own medium rather sparingly. It is true, that Moore had a task to perform of no ordinary difficulty: in the latter years of his life, the Poet had sinned deeply against the decorum of society, both in word and deed: much that he wrote, and much that he said and did, was in defiance of the opinion, though perhaps not the practice, of mankind. The work has, however, many beauties: it shows the poet at home in his study; it exhibits him full dressed in the public places; and it displays him joyous with wine and gladdened with witty company. It discloses his inmost thoughts: now he is stung to the heart by some allusion to his lameness, or some stern attack on his poetry; then he is seen gloomy, and even fierce, pondering over the shipwreck of his fortune and the ruin of his domestic peace; presently we have him penning some wild lampoon, or bidding defiance to fate, and resolving, since he was going to destruction, to go his own road.

Nor are there wanting hours of melting weakness and despondency, when he looks back on "prospects drear," and with dread on the dark and ominous future.

Of the 'Life of Fitzgerald,' I know not well what to say; perhaps it ought never to have been written: how he could sympathize with one who desired to give Ireland to France, I cannot comprehend.

THE DRAMA.

THIS is a part of my undertaking which I enter upon with a consciousness that if Poetry has kept its station, and Romance risen, in the Drama there is a visible descent. Not so much, indeed, in its poetry, for that is still high, as in the sobering of its high feeling—the taming of its wild passion; a coldness has crept over its fiery vehemence, and its nature is less the nature of the heart. Neither is the true character of dramatic composition so well understood as heretofore; the writers seem to forget that all is addressed to the eye as well as to the mind; the pure and eloquent blood of the drama no longer speaks in her veins like that of the poet's mistress: we are grown too retrospective; we describe rather than perform; the meaning is not made good by sensible signs;—and this is true of much of our poetry as well as of the drama. The life of the dialogue is wanting. Shakspeare, I need not say, is full of it; his plays would be understood by an audience were they acted in pantomime. We are civilized till we

are grown barbarous : ask a question of a country peasant respecting a road, he points with his finger as well as moves his tongue : a Frenchman, it has been said, could not tell a story with his hands tied ; he has a dramatic feeling, and calls in action to the aid of words, as our great poet does—

I saw a smith lean o'er his anvil thus.

We are grown cold, courteous, and civilized ; we live in continual proprieties both of action and of tongue ; it requires a bold, rough, free, outspoken person to be a good dramatic writer ; but where is such a person to be found in days when we “ duck with French nods,” and excel in “ apeish courtesy ?” Moreover, our principal theatres are totally unfit for calling forth the true beauties of the drama ; wit and humour, and all the richness of the dialogue, are swallowed up in the infinite space between the stage and the boxes ; every third word uttered is not heard by ordinary ears ; and actors have to strain their voices, till their natural tone is lost, and all is forced, exaggerated, and unnatural. We are also grown too wise to be pleased rapturously with anything ; we have too many ways of amusing ourselves—shows of all kinds,

books of every description," and Katterfelto, with his "hair on end," wondering at his own wonders: this makes us fastidious; peradventure we are grown critical; we know, or, what is worse, pretend to know everything; we judge the drama, and we pass sentence on the actors; we come with no wish to be pleased, but to be critical. An author who writes a book gets a calm audience; if God and nature are in him, the world will acknowledge it; if not immediately, after a lapse of days. A dramatic writer has a twofold dread upon him; he may be damned on account of the actors as well as from his want of wit. Another lion in the path is your great actor—your red-letter hero of the advertisement and play-bill. The poet must fit this man's body, and suit this man's mouth, in the manufacture of dramatic character: the fiery and impassioned Kean required a whole play to himself; he gave the little senate of Parnassus laws; and he who wrote a drama, in which, as in 'Brutus,' one character swallowed up all the others, was sure to write best. Nor was Kean alone in this; any one who reads the 'Correspondence of Garrick,' will see at once that he was the great dry-nurse of dulness in dramatic composition in his day. He was a pruner and

a slasher; he pollarded the dramatic tree; nor was his judgment in composition worth a farthing; he could not perceive the excellence of the tragedy of 'Douglas;' he looked upon the raptures of the mother over her long-lost son, and the heroic rising of the youth's heart, as nought. The drama has, in our day, declined towards the picturesque and the mechanical.

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

THE fame of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, as a wit and a dramatist, is deservedly high; his beginning was as bright and glorious as his latter days were dark and deplorable; in his twenty-third year he wrote 'The Rivals,' and in his twenty-sixth year, 'The School for Scandal'—comedies abounding with knowledge of character and manners, and flashes of wit and spirit, which show genius and extensive observation. He was idle at school, and acquired so little Greek and Latin, as almost to countenance a reproach of deficiency in classical attainments; but he was idle only in the eyes of pedants; he was reading lessons in living life, and laying in treasures of a mental kind, such as no schools

can supply. His mode of composition shows a laborious man; his comedies were not produced by a sudden effort of fancy; nothing that he wrote came spontaneously and unbidden from his mind; all was slow and tardy, showing a bit-by-bit process of construction, which promised nothing like the beauty it produced, and seemed alien to a mind sensitive and vehement. All that he wrote was the result of extraordinary labour; the germ of a fine thing was perceived by him in its rough state; and he wrought and refined till the wit came out brilliant and resistless from his skilful hand. The numerous sketches which he made of the plans of his plays, and the detached bits of dialogue which he amassed for use, prove that his genius was not quick and forgetive, but was content to creep to the mark at which others flew.

Something of this may be perceived in his scenes: they are full of wit and humour; but the wit and humour float on the stream of the dialogue rather than form a part of it; the scene seems to have been made for the things with which he ornaments it. Some of his best characters are not original: Mrs. Malaprop may be found in all her natural splendour in Fielding—coarser, indeed, but infinitely happier.

Yet no one cares how the wit comes that pleases, nor where the original of the character is to be found that helps us to laugh. All that he does is spirited; all that he says is witty; his dialogue is unlike that of all other dramatists, and seems copied from real life—from what he happened to observe and hear in polite society. There is, however, very little action, and very little warmth; no spontaneous bursts of unaffected feeling—all is polished and well bred: there is a want of heart, for which the presence of almost all other beauties cannot atone. Sheridan soon became weary of seeking fame at such outlay of labour: his wit made his company acceptable to the Prince of Wales and his gay companions; and he was content to set the table in a roar in Carlton House, in preference to shaking Old Drury with his sallies from rafter to foundation stone. It is true that he distinguished himself as an orator in the Commons, and for some time seemed as if about to take the lead; but wine and indolence prevailed: even long speeches, such as his, required preparation; and he became weary of that, and was content with the fame of being the most brilliant talker, the greatest conversational wit of the splendid circle in which he moved.

He reproached himself now and then as a waster of great powers; and in fits of remorse planned scenes for future plays, and penned passages of never spoken dialogues. That he drew his materials from life, all his scraps and fragments testify: in something like the rudiments of a play on Affectation, we find the following outline of a scene attached to Lady Clio. “What am I reading? Have I drawn nothing lately? Has the man been to untune the harpsichord? Does it look as if I had been playing on it? Shall I be ill to-day?—shall I be nervous?”—“Your La’ship was nervous yesterday.”—“Was I? then I’ll have a cold: I have n’t had a cold this fortnight—a cold is becoming;—no, I’ll not have a cough, that’s fatiguing: I’ll be quite well.”—“Your La’ship always looks vastly well when you’re ill—you become sickness.”—“Leave the book half read, and the rose half finished; you know I love to be caught in the fact.” An intriguing man is intimated with equal truth in another broken dialogue:—“Who am I in love with now?”—“You are laying close siege to Lady L. in the *Morning Post*, and have succeeded with Lady G. in the *Herald*; Sir F. is very jealous of you in the *Gazetteer*.”—“Remember, to-morrow, the

first you do put me in love with Mrs. C. I forgot to forget the *billet-doux* at Brooks's." If something like this is to be found in earlier writers, it only proves that affectation is true to all times and countries.

Of his poetry little can be said; it is weak in its flow, and wants fire and nature: it comes reluctantly from his mind when he desires to be tender or graceful; and if it comes easy at all, it is when he is peevish and personal. He addressed the prince of Wales concerning the exposing style of women's dress: I know not what the prince said in reply. The poem included some political seasoning, and lamented that the atrocities in apparel, so displeasing to delicate persons, should have been sought for in France, since absurdity might have been found at home. His genius was high, but not of the first order; it was imitative rather than inventive; he could embellish, but he could not create; he could see, but not imagine.

JOANNA BAILLIE

STANDS, by all but universal consent, at the head of the modern drama; she has exhibited

such force of nature, such knowledge of the world, and painted so vividly the light and shade of passion, that I know of no one who can be named with her. In all her dramas, there is uncommon breadth and massive vigour ; great variety of situation and character ; a vehement and nervous eloquence, and every where a strong unstudied happy force of language, such as the stage demands. In the pathetic scenes, she approaches Shakspeare ; her dialogues are full of thought ; she is no dealer in splendid nothings ; she has the language of the Muse, she has likewise her inspiration ; and we are not only moved and agitated, but we come away from her scenes with an accession of knowledge. The masculine energy of her language has been noticed by all her critics. Her Muse should be drawn with the serene dignity and austere composure of an antique statue—the Muse of others might be painted with wings and starry trains ; she is compact, they are diffuse ; she speaks to the point, they speak to show their wit, not to help on the story. Her works have not risen into fame without remark or remonstrance ; she calls her dramas ‘Plays on the Passions,’ and this has provoked a vast deal of sarcastic criticism, and caused writers to allege that she de-

sired to limit the boundless range of tragedy, and exhibit in a play one passion, and no more. She is wrong in the name of her dramas, and right in conception and execution; she meant that each play had its ruling passion, as almost all other plays have, like love in *Romeo and Juliet*, and the jealousy of *Othello*. The passion which she undertakes to display, comes with others in its train; jealousy goes hand in hand with anger and revenge, and love is too often allied to fear and jealousy: there is abundance of subordinate emotion, and no limitation whatever.

She has spoken the poetic language of her day, nor sought to dip her thoughts in the obsolete hues of antiquity; she felt that the language of the illustrious bards of the days of Elizabeth was natural to them, but unnatural to her; and as she loathes all affectation, she took the tone and colour of speech in her own time. This has given to her works an original and unborrowed air. In the plot and distribution of time, she avails herself of the liberties of the romantic drama, while, in many things else, she resembles the stern statue-like drama of the classic era. Some of her characters might be studied in the presence of the antique statues—for their

heroic dignity and perfect individuality of representation. She is, in poetry, what Flaxman was in sculpture; and by the side of some of his noble personifications of Scripture we might place the works of Joanna Baillie. She does not tell you what was, but, sculptor like, she shows you what is: she never loses sight of the object she has in view; she neither hides her heroes under the dazzling splendour of their coats armorial, nor overwhelms the distinct beauty of her thoughts in the flowers of embellished language. This sometimes gives a bold austerity to parts of her dialogues, which, taken by itself, is far from pleasing. If she is austere, she is never cold; she is sarcastic and ironical, but there is no fixed unkindliness of disposition about her; she sympathizes with the world, and feels deeply for human sorrow; but she is no puling lady who weeps for a cut finger, or goes into hysterics when a mantua's pinned awry.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

WHEN the Author of 'Waverley' wrote the introduction to 'The Fortunes of Nigel,' he hinted in a humorous way, his intention of writing a

drama, not, he said, in imitation of Lord Byron, for his Lordship was a cut above him, but in the vein of a much humbler writer, who had just published a dramatic attempt. Soon afterwards, 'Halidon Hill,' by Sir Walter Scott, was announced, and as the great poet had for some time abandoned the Muses, his unlooked for re-appearance excited great expectations. The work was not, however, a regular drama; those who expected a play divided into scenes and acts expressed disappointment, and added to their complaint, that the language was neither that of Shakspeare, nor so bold and dashing as those snatches of dramatic verse were, which introduced the chapters of the 'Waverley novels.' Others, who perused the work for the pleasure likely to be derived from it, were inclined to think much more favourably. There is, in truth, a heroic feeling, and a pathos, diffused all through the scenes, with which the modern drama has little to compare. The character of old Sir Allan Swinton—who had lived to see his seven sons fall, and to avenge them; and that of young Gordon, the son of his enemy, whose father he had slain in avenging the blood of his children, are drawn with great discrimination, and are such as no one can read audibly, with-

out attesting their influence with tears. The fault as a piece of dramatic composition, is a frequent glancing back at other days, when heroic deeds were done; in fact, it could not well be otherwise, for the conception of the story required it. There is also too much description.

The poet, in his play of 'Auchendrane,' displayed real tragic power, and soothed all those who cried out before for a more direct story and less of the retrospective. Several of the scenes are conceived and executed with all the powers of the best parts of 'Waverley;' the verse, too, is more rough, natural, and nervous, than that of 'Halidon Hill;' but, noble as the effort was, it was eclipsed so much by his splendid romances, that the public still complained that he had not done his best, and that his genius was not dramatic. This was unfair: he had led the way in poetry and romance, and there was nothing in those fine works to disprove his genius for the drama. The great—the unrivalled command which he exercised over character; the skill with which he evolved his incidents; the bright and living colours in which he delineated all he touched—all seemed to indicate the possession of dramatic qualities such as might ensure success. But there is a great difference in

these various kinds of compositions; the romance allows glancings back—nay, goings back and steppings forward; part may be exhibited in conversation like a play, and part can be described like the chorus in a Greek tragedy, but in the dramas of our own day, all must be addressed to the eye and to the ear. The writer should ever keep in mind, that he has a large audience to instruct, and that they must gain their knowledge from the speech and action of the actors. That Scott knew all this, his letters written to his friends on dramatic composition, sufficiently show; but he was not the first great writer who laid down rules which he could not himself follow. I am, however, inclined to think, that had he addressed himself seriously to the drama, he would have distinguished himself as much as he did in the fields of romance.

COLERIDGE.

THE genius of Coleridge is poetic rather than dramatic. His poetry is rich and glowing; it abounds in lofty sentiments; there is a picturesque splendour in its imagery, and a luxuriance of fancy, such as few have equalled. But

he delights in the metaphysical and the obscure; he is not plain enough for the public, and has suffered in reputation with the crowd, though not at all in the opinion of those who can appreciate the true beauties of imagination. His play of 'Remorse' was well received by the world, and warmly applauded; it abounds in scenes of great force and feeling. The plot is far from clear, and not very probable, some of the principal characters, though always visible to their friends in their own prosper persons, are sometimes known and sometimes not: Teresa cannot recognize her acquaintance Alvar, neither does Ordonio nor Isidor discover him. It requires, too, a more than common stretch of imagination to fill up the vacancies between the acts; the poet takes too long steps for probability. The beauty of the play is its picturesque poetry, and its fault is, that all is too imaginative, lofty, and majestic. We want commoner and every-day matters; we want more done and less said, and desire that the language should be plainer and more suitable to the comprehension of the audience. The following truly touching and splendid passage will illustrate my meaning: how few who heard it uttered, could understand its mysterious and learned allusion.

With no irreverent voice or uncouth charm
I call up the departed. Soul of Alvar!
Hear our soft suit. Since haply thou art one
Of that innumerable company
Who in broad circle lovelier than the rainbow
Girdle this round earth in a dizzy motion,
With noise too vast and constant to be heard:
[Fitliest unheard! For, oh! ye numberless
And rapid travellers, what ear, unstunned,
What sense, unmaddened, might bear up against
The rushing of your congregated wings? (*Music.*)
Even now your living wheel turns o'er my head;
Ye as ye pass toss high the desert sands,
That roar and whiten like a burst of waters—
A sweet appearance, but a dread illusion
To the parched caravan that roams by night.
And ye build up on the becalmed waves,
That whirling pillar, which from earth to heaven
Stands vast, and moves in blackness.

Through all this noble poem—for it is more a poem than a drama, there is a visible imitation of Shakspeare. “In general, his imitation,” says one of his critics, “is of that judicious kind, which is felt everywhere and seen nowhere, a likeness of the whole rather than a copy of any part; in some instances, however, by boldly venturing to try his strength with his great master, he forces us to a comparison of particular passages which is not favourable to him. The imitation, for instance, of Hamlet’s picture of his father and uncle, though not without some beautiful lines, appears to be the effort of an in-

judicious and mistaken ambition. It is one thing to invent, another to imitate; it is one thing, as by inspiration, to throw out a bright passage which shall become a text in the mouths of all men for ever, and another to study that passage, to enlarge its beauties, supply its defects, to prune its luxuriances, and thus at length produce a faultless copy of an imperfect original." Coleridge gives us splendid passages, but he fails to connect them with matters of living and visible life, and must, as a dramatist, be content with the high fame which closet perusal brings.

LORD BYRON.

THERE are grand and terrific passages in the dramas of Lord Byron; he is, in my mind, oftener in the upper air of poetry in his plays than in his poems; but, at the same time, it must be felt, that, as works to be represented by actors in an intelligible way to a common audience, they are one and all comparative failures. An orator, when he addresses a meeting, amplifies and repeats, for he knows he must make himself understood; when he finds that in some of his flights he is not followed, he comes closer to

earth, and speaks like an ordinary mortal: our dramatic writers, on the contrary, calculate too much on the ingenuity of the audience; they are poetic, they are lofty, they are mystical; they speak in a way that no man ever did who hoped to be comprehended; they indulge in addresses to the moon and to the elements; they make long metaphysical harangues; they turn their minds to everything save to the pressing business of the plot, and then wonder that they are not understood. The dramas of Byron are full of errors of that kind; they have abundance of dramatic power, the language is often concise and singularly massive, and the situations are frequently striking and grand; but they cannot be represented with the hope of being impressive. It is true the noble poet declares that he wrote them without any idea of the stage; but they are divided and parcelled out, as is usual with other dramatic compositions; he stickles too for the unities, and declares that they are essential to the existence of the drama. "This was the law," he says, "till lately in the world, and is still so in the more civilized parts of it!" A play is not a mere dialogue; it implies action, and necessarily supposes that something is to pass before the eyes of the audience. That Lord

Byron thought of all this as he wrote, there can be no doubt, since the reader has to suppose it for the sake of understanding his dialogues, for many of them require action to make them out. That he had not this always in his mind, is a leading fault in his plays. With respect to the unities, it is enough to say, that Shakspeare contrived to write wonderfully natural and probable dramas in spite of them, and no one misses, and no one desires them. We may as well demand the individual Macbeth to step upon the stage, as that the unities shall be maintained. Byron was, perhaps, the worst critic of his day; his opinions are generally wrong, and always most so when he utters them deliberately.

His dramas, through he did not intend them for representation, are not few: 'Manfred,' 'Marino Faliero,' 'Sardanapalus,' 'The Two Foscari,' 'Cain, a Mystery,' &c. In the first of these, there are scenes exceedingly sublime and terrific; there is a mystery about the hero of the piece, which is easier seen through than explained; he is, in truth, a stained and hateful being; we shudder to read the passages in which this solitary spirit holds communion with himself, and turn with loathing from the dark and disgusting intimations which he gives us. On 'Marino

Faliero,' the public voice, from the first, pronounced condemnation; it is another but inferior sort of 'Venice Preserved:' that it contains splendid passages, may well be supposed, for none of Byron's poetry is without such; there are speeches full of commanding eloquence, which may be compared with anything in modern composition. The Doge, a man of gravity, and stricken in years, resolves to ruin his country, because a foolish boy lampooned him about his young wife. This is not a reason weighty enough: Jaffier had a cause sufficient—unmerited poverty, and the undeserved suffering of his family. There is an unbending severity of diction in this play, which at times is harsh and dissonant; vulgar persons and the rabble may be allowed to speak in a prosaic way; but some of his high characters utter language which no one can call poetic.

The 'Sardanapalus' is of another stamp; it is poetical to voluptuousness; yet the richness of the diction corresponds with the character of the prince—all is magnificent as the waking dream of Sir Epicure Mammon. The Assyrian king, when danger comes, starts from his scented cushions and his jewelled queens, and thinks and acts like a hero; he has, indeed, been repre-

sented as not only effeminate, but vicious; but of this, little is seen in the hour of danger: his best servants are faithful, the noblest of his concubines love him, and he conducts his army with a skill and fights with a courage worthy of his ancestors. When vanquished, not by the treachery or the bravery of man, but by the elements, he seeks death with a dignified ferocity which belies the assertions of his enemies. He is in fact a more slothful Demetrius, but has a worthier end than the "son of old blind Antigonus." His is the most masterly of the many characters drawn by Byron. He is painted young, beautiful, and brave, but spoiled by flattery and self-indulgence; schooled by Salamenes and his Queen, he runs into dissipation, and defends his folly with a witty sophistry that reconciles him to it; he knows himself better than any one around him does; he believes that he can resume the natural heroism of his soul when he pleases, and scorns the flattery which he courts. Selfishness is mingled with generosity; he is, in short, a compound of good and evil; but, in the hour of trial, the former prevails and comes out in a grandeur equally natural and overpowering. Nor has he unworthy companions; the stern and heroic Salamenes, and the not less

heroic Myrrha, are characters equally original as his own: the former is a clear-sighted, plain-spoken soldier; to his king, in spite of personal neglect and family injuries, he is loyal and faithful; he has no ambition—no desire of power; Assyria is his war-cry; his prince and his country are ever in his thoughts; and he falls, fearful that the line of Nimrod is about to cease. Myrrha was a slave in the haram, but raised, by her beauty, her talents, her Grecian courage, and her love, to be the companion and confident of Sardanapalus. Her love for the King is a purified passion; she knows the natural vigour of his mind, and, without any passionate rant or tearful entreaties, seeks to win him to a sense of coming danger, that he may meet and crush it. There is a calm, a tranquil grandeur of character about her, Grecian and godlike; yet, she is always womanly—always gentle and affectionate: I know of no character in the whole range of our drama, which can be compared with hers.

‘The Two Foscari’ is very inferior to ‘Manfred’ or ‘Sardanapalus;’ few of the characters are above mediocrity; the play is full of poetry; and those who would hoot it from the stage, would applaud it in the closet. Of ‘Cain, a

Mystery,' it is enough to say, that it was written for an evil purpose, and though much genius was lavished upon it, we must contemplate it as a failure. It can never be understood by the world at large; we could ill enough endure the devil as he was before, but when he adds metaphysics to his other terrors we detest and shun him. The plays of Byron have added largely to the stock of dramatic poetry. They abound in brilliant excursions of fancy—in rich and vehement dialogues—in a picturesque display of scene and incident, and in passages of sublimity and magnificence.

MATURIN.

THERE is much force and wildness in the 'Bertram' of Maturin. It had once something too of the supernatural, but the author was prevailed upon to omit it, though he injured the unity of the story, which is of the romantic kind, by yielding to the taste of the age. 'Bertram' came recommended to the world by the united voices of Scott and Byron, and, for awhile, criticism respected their authority, and spared its incoherent language, improbable incidents, and

distracted vehemence. It is strange, and startling, and impressive; it has many faults, and they all belong to genius. Maturin is never flat or dull; in truth, he is too full of motion—too impassioned—too ecstatic—too everything. Common incidents never happen with him in a common or natural way; all is forced and exaggerated. Maturin had fine talent: he delineates all to the eye as well as to the mind, and shows no ignorance of human nature.

MILMAN.

THE 'Fazio' of Milman has given him a high place among modern dramatists; it was an attempt, he said, to revive the old national drama with greater simplicity of plot. Some of the plots of our old plays are plain and simple enough; in constructing his story, he has avoided all entanglement, but he has imagined an incident on which to raise the superstructure of his drama, which requires him to triumph over great difficulties, and when we should be rapt and carried off our feet by the whirlwind and passion of the scene, we find ourselves marveling at the wondrous ingenuity of the poet.

Having finished his story at the third act, in the condemnation of Fazio, he has to labour to sustain the interest of expiring events through two more acts; and though this is not done without passages of tenderness and passion, they go off coldly in the representation: the audience feel they are destined to hear more last words, and desire something new. The character of Fazio is striking and original: he is naturally a good man, with a nobleness of mind which even the folly he commits cannot conceal. He is a student in alchemy, and has all but achieved wealth by the discovery of the philosopher's stone, when his next-door neighbour, a wealthy miser, rushes at midnight mortally wounded into his studio, and Fazio cannot withstand the temptation of burying him secretly and seizing on his wealth. One crime leads to another; in spite of the beauty and affection of his wife Bianca, he forms an attachment to another woman, as vain as she was beautiful, and Bianca, in a moment of resentment, from a wish to keep her husband from her rival, informs the senate of the fate of the miser and his hoards. She finds, when too late, that she has done too much; he is condemned for robbery and murder, and having wearied heaven and earth with prayers

and entreaties for his life, she refuses to survive him and dies. Bianca is a well-drawn character—her love for her husband, her admiration of his talents, and her despair and anguish at his condemnation, place her among the few natural heroines of the latter days of the drama. To this is opposed the serene fortitude of Fazio; no murmurs of reproach or regret escape from him; the thoughts of his orphan children alone occupy his mind, and his dialogue with Bianca touching their fate is of exquisite softness and mournful beauty. The language is, however, too lofty and elaborate for the stage; there is an artificial sustainment about it, which lifts it above the rough unstudied vigour of the language of actual life. Though not sufficiently dramatic, the genius of the poet is fertile in combinations, and quick in the invention of incident. His feelings are fine; his moral sensibility deep, and he pictures forth events with wonderful truth and force.

PROCTOR.

THE sweetness, tenderness, and elegant fancy of Proctor appear to less advantage on the

stage than in the closet. He loves to dwell on the gentle affections—on the love, strong as death, in the female heart; and, though he is not deficient in strength, he leans less to the austere and the stormy than some of our elder dramatists do. He sees all through a poetic medium: whatever he says, he says it like a poet; his fancy is ever active, and his affections ever warm: he has not the heart to draw a thoroughly bad character. He has many noble thoughts—many touching and impressive situations: his language is easy and ready; he is a good judge of the harmonies of composition—all is in keeping—all is in character. He has less of robust and passionate strength than what seems needful to awaken the boxes and bring thunder from above. His ‘*Mirandola*’ has much of the tender, the domestic, and the mournful: it was well—nay, flatteringly received, and called white muslin into use; but, with all its merits, it belongs rather to poetry than to the drama.

CROLY

HAS a quick sense of the absurd and the ludicrous; and some of his sarcastic passages are beyond comparison happy. His comedy of 'Pride shall have a Fall' is at once impressive and comic. It was thought that the acknowledged merit of this play, and the applause which it obtained, would have induced the author to make more experiments: he is now in the church, and leaves the business of comedy "to folks less divine."

MISS MITFORD.

'RIENZI' seems the best of the various plays of Miss Mitford: the most impressive parts are those which express a love of liberty in the Tribune, and domestic affection in his daughter. The sentiments savour of old Rome; and a vision of her dignity is revived in the scenes of the play. The audience knew it was all a dream—a passing pageant:—that the republic of Rienzi was crushed almost as soon as imagined

but the shadow even of freedom is welcome to all, and they sat and rejoiced and applauded. His was a wild scheme, and originated in ignorance of the nature of the elements out of which he proposed to evoke his republic: the people were too corrupt: he might as well have tried to build a tower with rotten apples. The play added fame even to the fame of Miss Mitford: her little domestic stories had given the world a high notion of her dramatic powers; for they travelled where her name, as the authoress of 'Julian,' the 'Vespers of Palermo,' and 'Foscari,' had not reached. There is great truth and nature in all her dialogues, and an insight into mind and motives worthy of the authoress of 'Our Village.'

RICHARD SHIEL

Is now an actor, and an eloquent one, on a stage where the nation is the audience, and seems to have forgotten 'Evadne' and 'The Apostate.' There is much vigour of language, force of character, and originality of incident about his dramas: he is earnest, fervent, and impassioned—he is also unequal, and sometimes

improbable. All the grand elements of the drama seem in him: he has made a poor exchange, as far as fame is concerned, in preferring, like Sheridan, to move the House of Commons rather than agitate the audience in Old Drury.

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES

Is a dramatic poet and actor; and in both has been more than successful. As an actor he is earnest and natural; he heeds but the subject matter in hand: boxes and galleries, which are all in all to others, are as nothing to him: by the simple force of unaffected acting he carries the spectator with him, and gives much of the idea of the living character. He has little or nothing of stage breeding about him; he looks like a gentleman who has quitted the boxes to sustain a part in which he feels himself quite at home. The vehemence which he sometimes gives way to, is the nature of the man, and not at all put on. As he acts, so he writes; the earnestness and downright sincerity which distinguish him on the stage follow him into the closet; the warm heart and the generous feel-

ings are nothing abated. The poetry of his dialogue is the poetry of passion : it is kindled up in him by the collision of events, and seems less proper to the man than to the scene ; his language is to the purpose ; it is but little ornamented. His dramas are full of impressive groupings—domestic incidents—the bustle of business—the activity of life : he subdues subject, scene, and language, to the purpose and aim of the play. In this he differs from many writers, and differs for the better. His strength lies in home-bred affections : his ‘*Virginus*,’ his ‘*Beggar’s Daughter*,’ and his ‘*Wife of Mantua*,’ all bear evidence of this, and contain scenes of perfect truth and reality, such as no modern dramatist surpasses. He touches the heart and is safe. He is a capital actor, because he does not act at all ; and he is an admirable dramatic writer because he has no affectation ; and subdues his poetry till it becomes an auxiliary to the plot, and embellishes without overpowering it.

CRITICISM.

THIS is the century of criticism: the age of brass has succeeded that of gold. The sagacious Lord Kames and the learned Blair spoke of genius with respect and reverence: a race bold and intrepid came after them;—men with a good deal of learning and wit, and a vast deal of assurance, sat down in the critic's chair, and dealt out their raw, rash, and audacious opinions. The world, unaccustomed to hear the merits of the natural heirs of fame questioned, marvelled at this boldness for a time, and knew not what to do; but the desire to see the high humbled, prevailed: it is not unpleasing to an ordinary man to be told, that those whom he looked upon as colossal are, after all, little above his own height. The laugh which was raised against almost all men who are now regarded as eminent, was first raised in Edinburgh; it was loudly re-echoed elsewhere; the lamp of criticism was hung before the star of genius, and the multitude all but worshipped the

artificial light. This system commenced at a time when all that man had received as true, or that God had revealed, began to be questioned and doubted. A desire of change had come upon man; he was anxious for political regeneration; he believed in national perfectibility; he was desirous of blotting out all records as injurious to his majesty, and of beginning, like Adam, the world anew. The critics imagined, that as the body corporate was decayed, all else was rotten—this was their grand mistake: whatever else was wrong—and there was much—literature was right;—how could it be otherwise? it came spontaneously from the heart and head;—if nature was right, literature was right also. Such a mistake could only have happened to men with more wit than imagination. But that was not all: it was necessary to make the doctrine popular; and as this could not be done without abusing Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge, the critics commenced by describing those great original poets as wrong-headed, dreaming enthusiasts, who would not sing like other men, and were deficient alike in taste and genius. For themselves, it was easy to see that, in their own eyes, they were, if not gods, the first of men, to whose dictum all heads were

required to bow, and by whose directions the Muse was to regulate her flights. Moreover, it was observed that the bard who sung in harmony with Whig principles, was lifted by these conscientious critics higher than his natural sphere, and pointed out as an object of admiration. Crabbe sat high in the northern heaven; Campbell was a son of the morning; while Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge were treated as will-o'-wisps, whose light was wayward and unnatural.

As an antidote against the poisonous nostrums of the Whigs, the Tories came out, when it was almost too late, with prescriptions, which they imagined would restore the body, political and literary, to health and strength. To combat the *Edinburgh Review*, the *Quarterly Review* was established; and the strife which ensued was amusing to all who had no books to be criticised, or opinions which they wished held sacred. These two powerful periodicals played the same part in literature which the Whigs and Tories performed in the Parliament: they had nothing in common; they had no sympathy with each other: the gods of the *Quarterly* were blocks of wood or stone with the *Edinburgh*; while those whom the latter delighted

to honour, were insulted and traduced by the former. The contest, however, was not an open one: it was carried on in a tone of sneering civility, bitter sarcasm, and contemptuous allusion. The learning and irony of the *Quarterly* were well contrasted with the eloquence and wit of the *Edinburgh*; but genius suffered sadly in the strife. All was seen through the mist and prejudice of party. No attempt was made, indeed, by the former, to dethrone the established princes of song; but it assailed others—younger sons—who were struggling up the Whig side of Parnassus. Keats and Shelley were forced rudely down for a time; and the merits of Hazlitt were refused to be acknowledged. Generally speaking, however, the atrocities of the *Edinburgh* were fourfold in amount to those of the *Quarterly*; and this may be, in some measure, accounted for, by the circumstance, that the editor of the latter, if not a Whig, had most of the Whig likings, and made unaccountable selections of his victims, to the astonishment even of the party whose standard he carried. In looking over the volumes of these different productions, we may see that both have sometimes exalted a dunce as a genius, and knocked down a genius as a

dunce. They have each their coterie prejudices : the *Quarterly* loves lords and ladies; the *Edinburgh* political economists and speculators: both incline to support the brightness of learning against the fire of nature, and the influence of party against that of genius. The chief apostles and founders of these fierce systems were Jeffrey and Gifford—men of humble birth, of good education, with wit at will, and unbounded confidence in their powers.

FRANCIS JEFFREY

CONDUCTED the *Edinburgh Review* during the brightest period of its existence. He is a person of great quickness of apprehension; of powerful, and when he pleases, playful wit; his knowledge is extensive and various; his language lively and pointed; he can adorn the most barren topic, or render the dullest agreeable, by his witty levity and his sparkling eloquence. What then is wanting to enable him to fill the judgment seat of criticism with honour to himself and with profit to others? He wants imagination. He not only has little imagi-

nation of his own, but he does not perceive that no work of genius can exist without it; that it is the preserving soul which makes works immortal. Wherever he has met with it, he looks upon it with the eye of contempt, and casts it from him as the Arabs did the oriental pearls in the wilderness. This is the true secret of the scorn which he has heaped on the chief poets of our day: his reviews of Scott, Wordsworth, Southey, Coleridge, and Montgomery, all exhibit the original deficiency of the critic; they are not judged by their peers; he cannot judge them; they have risen beyond his reach, into the atmosphere of imagination—to his upturned and wondering eyes, such flights are folly, and he thinks that genius, like Antæus, must die when it forsakes the ground. Had Jeffrey possessed imagination, he would never have penned the insulting reviews to which I allude. His criticisms did great injury to the cause of literature; his sarcastic strictures tamed down the elastic and bounding spirit of man; poets wrote with the fear of the critic upon them, and dreaded the universal laugh of the world. Birds seldom sing well when the kite is in the air, and Bards dreaded the Judge Jeffrey of our day, as much as political offenders dreaded the Judge Jeffreys

of James the Second. By criticisms such as his, true genius is defrauded of its fame for a time, and elegant and polished mediocrity prospers and flourishes. Where are many of the writers he has praised?—gone to oblivion, with all their glitter; where are some of the writers he has traduced and abused?—sitting on the highest pinnacles of fame.

WILLIAM GIFFORD.

IN the vast harm and little good which Jeffrey did to literature, he was aided by William Gifford, who, if he did not originate, edited for many years the *Quarterly Review*. He was a man of extensive knowledge; was well acquainted with classic and old English lore; so learned, that he considered all other people ignorant; so wise that he was seldom pleased with anything; and, as he had not risen to much eminence in the world, he thought no one else was worthy to rise. He almost rivalled Jeffrey in wit, and he surpassed him in scorching sarcasm and crucifying irony. Jeffrey wrote with a sort of levity which induced men to doubt if he were sincere in his strictures: Gifford wrote

with an earnest fierceness, which showed the delight which he took in his calling. There was no personal ill-will in what Jeffrey did; he wished to raise a laugh at the author's expense, and provided he said a good thing he was satisfied: it was otherwise with Gifford; he wrote as if he wrote in contempt of man—as if he had a grudge against the whole human race; he was not content with making the author ridiculous, he desired to heap scorn on his person, and to make him out a fool, a knave, or an atheist. This was pitiable—and the more so, when we reflect on the birth and breeding of the critics. Though once a sea-boy—not on the high and giddy mast, but in a coasting collier; though once a shoemaker—not one who equips the feet with what is elegant and new, but a patching cobbler—he had no sympathy with genius struggling into notice from a condition as humble as his own;—with him Bloomfield was but “the shoemaker;” Burns, “the Scotch ploughman;” and Hogg, a shepherd, whose verses smelt of the surgery of sheep; of Clare, the Northamptonshire peasant, he spoke with unlooked-for kindness—as the lady in Pope once paid the tradesman, “to make him stare.” Though he obtained his learning through the accidental charity

of a neighbour, and the almost miraculous bounty of Earl Grosvenor, he had no charity for other struggling scholars: he held out a kindly hand to no one, except when the prosperity of the *Quarterly Review*, or his own personal predilections, required it. With certain of the old Whigs he lived on the same terms as the giant did with Ulysses in the cave—spared them for the present, resolved, when tenderer food failed, to make them his last regale. But show him a young Whig, who did not pertain to the coterie, presuming to set a foot on Parnassus, then forth came Gifford in his strength. He lay and looked quietly on him with his rattlesnake eyes; moved towards him as if he moved not at all; then dropping suddenly upon him, crushed his bones like a boa, and left not a vestige of him in the land. It was sometimes his pleasure to hunt higher game; if he injured genius, he was not slow in exposing ignorance, or in heaping scorn on shallow pretence. The Review abounds with instances of successful and meritorious criticism; there are admirable discussions on old English poetry, and on dramatic literature: there Gifford was in his glory and in his strength.

LORD BROUGHAM.

AMONG the chiefs of Jeffrey's critical staff, Lord Brougham must be named with the foremost. His knowledge is extensive, and his genius of a high order: no other living man, perhaps, knows so much; and his activity is equal to his talents. He seems to have, through inspiration, more than other men acquire by study; and any one who waits on him to open up some secret in science or literature, will find that he is already acquainted with it—nay, has studied it, and is prepared to instruct others in the mystery. Some acquire a smattering of many things, and, by looking wise and speaking mystically, pass for men of fine taste and deep knowledge: it is otherwise with Brougham—he has penetrated through the surface of all things; he seems familiar with the spirit and essence as well as the outward form of whatever he discourses upon—he is the Admirable Crichton of his day. His wit is ready and unwearied; his irony is like the droppings of nitric acid, and follows its victim to the grave; while his power of illustration ranges through all that is learned, tasteful, and

scientific. The quickness of his perception and the exuberance of his knowledge make him impatient and fretful; he has no sympathy with duller spirits; he loves to go up to the mark at once; and resents it as a fault, that others walk while he is flying. A high sense of his own powers, and a contempt for those of other men, make him an indifferent critic. He loved in other days to prophesy in politics, and of nations;—events did not always happen as he had imagined. Into literature he entered as a partisan rather than a judge; he dissected to expose, not to amend: it was his pleasure to utter a sneer instead of a sound opinion; and to speak ironically, when he ought to have spoken with gentleness and toleration.

SYDNEY SMITH

HAS long been numbered among the stern band of critics, who love to harass the sensitive sons of verse. His wit and his learning entitle him to judge of high matters; though we are far from commending the spirit in which some of his comments are written, or admitting that it is seemly in a divine to meddle with such

nettly and thistly matters as sarcastic and ironical criticisms. He is one of those persons of whom the poet speaks, who miss the way to fame in original composition, and then turn critics, less in their own defence, than with the desire of casting down or pulling back others who are on their way to distinction. Much talent has flowed into the channel of criticism; but it is an error to suppose that this has prevented such persons from making a name for themselves: on the contrary, almost all those who are distinguished in criticism, attempted, both by prose and verse, to obtain notice; and, having failed in this, they set up for judges of the very articles which they could not themselves produce. We have seen stanzas by very proud critics, where

The muses on their racks
Scream like the windings of ten thousand jacks.

SIR JAMES MACKINTOSH

Was a critic of a milder mood: his knowledge reached from east to west; he was familiar with the history of our literature, and tasted the racy spirit of our earlier verse like a poet of

the highest order. He wrote the splendid retrospects of English Literature, which sustained the fading glory of the *Edinburgh Review*. But he inclined more to discussion than to criticism: he seldom embroiled himself in personal matters; he loved to speculate in magnificent generalities; and, save in the case of Lingard's account of the massacre of the Innocents, he avoided minute detail and circumstantial injury. If he chanced to dip his wing in the stream of sarcastic criticism, he soon rose again into upper air.

WILLIAM HAZLITT

WAS a singular mixture of sagacity of remark and oddity of opinion: he knew much: he was a skilful judge in art; his taste in literature was undoubted; and he saw through the varnish into the solid wood of all that he turned his eyes upon. His passion for singularity was injurious to his fame; his party spirit embroiled him with men who commanded engines powerful enough to crush him; and a certain indiscreet way of uttering his sentiments shocked many who gave the tone to opinion. The consequence was,

Hazlitt was underrated, and considered by many as a lover of paradox, and a man who could only utter odd and remarkable things. Yet he could go at once into the true beauties of a poem, as a bee goes to the honey of the flower. He had imagination and sensibility.

THOMAS CARLYLE

HAS added the German feeling of criticism to that of his native land: his articles, amid much that is odd and startling, abound with flashes of natural fire, and show a spirit, searching, profound, and philosophic.

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

HAS fine qualities, and perhaps is the only one of all the club of northern critics, who unites high imagination with deep sagacity—a feeling of the tender and the touching, with a love of the sharp and the satiric. He is sometimes more dazzling than accurate; and may be accused of overlooking beauties, and occasionally

of discovering them where they can scarcely be said to exist. He has aided in giving a tone of kindness to the *Edinburgh Review*, which was greatly wanted: we have no longer any of those biting and insulting papers, in which true genius was trampled in the mire, and some ass, who brayed on the Whig side of the common, exalted as a deity. The Review itself has ceased to be a Fee-fa-fum to young authors: the public has seen the folly of following in the train of judges who condemned the good and exalted the indifferent. The bright have risen into eminence in spite of their censure; and the dull have descended to oblivion in spite of their praise. Booksellers no longer take their opinion from criticism, and a writer suffers no material injury from its attacks. When Pope satirized Ralph, the latter found that the trade had lost all confidence in his capacity; when Jeffrey attacked Lamb and Montgomery, they rose into reputation notwithstanding. In truth, the impatience of the public will not permit them to wait till the quarterly quota of criticism is issued: before the book is well dried, it is opened up in a thousand hands; and when Macaulay's splendid disquisition makes its appearance, he finds the work is either high in favour, and re-

quires no aid, or is already dead, and beyond the reach of censure.

JOHN WILSON CROKER.

GIFFORD had the help of some of the first men of the age in his *Quarterly*: their generous sentiments, extensive learning, and high genius, mingled fair flowers and sweet fruits with his brambles and sloes. John Wilson Croker more than approached the editor in sarcastic sallies and biting wit: he gave early proofs of such powers in his poem on the Irish stage; intimated talents active and argumentative in his speeches; and a poetic feeling and spirit approaching Scott, in his Peninsular battles. To his pen many articles full of political wormwood are attributed; and also some of the papers on America, which were not received in a tone of thankfulness by the men of the West. To political things it is perhaps wise to apply the scorpion lash; but the gentler amenities of literature require a tender heart and a lenient hand. It was the fault of the critics of the *Quarterly* to be attached too much to caste: they allowed the gall of party to mingle with many of their sen-

timents : they had no idea of doing a good deed for the republic of letters ; they desired to confound their political opponents, and exalt themselves ; but, as the Review rose, the party, whose sentiments it uttered, sunk.

SIR WALTER SCOTT

CONTRIBUTED largely to the *Quarterly Review* : his articles are numerous ; they are full of sagacious remarks, sparkling observations, and anecdotes of a historical or biographical nature. Some of them, such as the reviews of 'Salmonia' and the 'Life of John Home,' may be conveyed bodily to the pages of the biographer : they are anything but criticisms—they are much better ; they are imbued with the spirit of those of whom he speaks, and are serious and comic, general and minute, and so readable that we love to return to them, and cannot quit them till we have them by heart. He gave to his disquisitions all the attractions of a memoir, and sometimes of a romance : he filled them with the literary gossip of his early days, and told tales of the great men of the Scottish capital, which carried us back to the days of the Humes,

the Homes, the Robertsons, and the Blairs. His earlier contributions have more of the air and tone of criticism than his latter: in his review of the 'Reliques of Burns,' he hazards opinions on the merits of the illustrious peasant, in some of which I cannot concur; and inserts doubtful anecdotes which darken the already too gloomy narrative of the poet's short career. Burns and Scott stood in different positions, and occupied different pedestals and elevations on the hill of fame: their manners were unlike; their feelings had little resemblance; the characters of their minds were as remote from each other as the east is distant from the west; and had Burns lived to write his opinion of Scott, he would have erred, perhaps, both in estimate of character and genius. They could not have understood one another.

ROBERT SOUTHEY.

THE contributions of Robert Southey are of a peculiar kind: he avoids direct collision as frequently as he can with the immediate object of his criticism; but he indicates his opinion by a thousand allusions and parallels drawn from

history or from nature. Others please—he pleases and instructs: he has such learning as few can equal; such knowledge of literature, foreign as well as domestic, as no one else possesses; and an alacrity of fancy, a quickness of wit, and an original force of remark, which seem inexhaustible. The fountain of his judgment and imagination is never dry: it wells up and refreshes the most barren topics; those who desire to see the wonders which genius can work, or who wish to taste true knowledge in right racy English, ought to read the reviews of Southey. Though he avoids severity, and preserves a mild and philosophical mood in the midst of his researches and examinations, it must not be supposed that he has not a spice of the satirist in him; in truth, he is, on fitting occasions, sarcastic and stern: when smitten, he smites again; he does not content himself with flashes of wit and strokes of irony: these are but the accompaniments of his argument, as rain and tempests are of thunder and fire; he flays his victim while he shows him in the wrong, and then anoints him with nitric acid and oil of vitriol. These terrible exhibitions happen seldom, and only in cases of great provocation: true genius can be safer with no one than with Southey.

JOHN GIBSON LOCKHART.

WHEN old age and failing powers demanded the retirement of Gifford, he was succeeded, though not immediately, by John Gibson Lockhart. A change was soon visible in the character of the Review: it showed a wider and a deeper sympathy in the fortunes of genius; the insults which Shelley had suffered were, in some measure, atoned for; praise was extended to the classic fancy of Keats; and, in short, good will to all who could claim a share in feeling and imagination, was the order of the day. Nor was this all: the editor allowed his contributors to indulge no longer in their bitter and exasperating disquisitions concerning America: a love of freedom and an admiration of Washington forbade this; and though there is an occasional fling against republican principles and difference of manners, it is all allowable; nor does it much affect our brethren of the western continent: they are sensible of an increase of kindness and of a decrease of ill-will, and acknowledge it. Changes so important as these were not looked for under Lockhart. He brought with him the

reputation of ready wit, piercing sarcasm, and withering irony; and as he had hitherto used his powers like a prodigal, it was thought he would not spare them now when a battle was about to be fought, compared to which all his other combats were but skirmishes. Many regarded him as a second Jeffrey, with equal wit and talent for ridicule, and a disposition to be fierce and severe—they have been agreeably disappointed. He is, it is true, sometimes sharp enough; and in his reviews of romances and novels weighs them in the Waverley balance, and finds them wanting; but, on the whole, he is fair and tolerant, and frequently kind. He has imagination and learning—a union not common in editors.

Though the *Edinburgh*, the *Quarterly*, and the *Westminster*, are the chief of our critical periodicals, we are by no means disposed to consider them as alone influencing our literature. In truth, some of the best disquisitions on poetry ever penned in the island belong not to them, but to *Blackwood's Magazine*, and are by a true poet, John Wilson. The imagination which Jeffrey wants, he has to overflowing; the mercury of his genius stands as high as that of

any one. He has fancy for the highest and humour for the lowest; and in no flight or vagary can any genius indulge in which he cannot sympathize. Such a singular combination of qualities was perhaps never before known. He will dream with the proudest poet that ever sat on Parnassus, and then leave a heavenly superstructure worthy of the imagination of Martin, to snickle hares and rabbits with some poacher at its base. It is in no particular series of papers that he has made all this manifest: he scatters his criticisms in strange places: we may find them—and of the deepest and richest kind—wrought in with bacchanalian orgies, or wild bursts of festivity and hare-brained enjoyment. He sometimes composes his brow and bends his faculties to the critic's task alone: it will then be seen that he feels poetry in all his veins; that he is possessed with its highest spirit; and extends his views over all nations and subjects. His dissertations on Homer will prove all I have said, and more: where is there more knowledge, more learning, more feeling, combined with so much genius and such exquisite judgment? With all the English translations of Homer he is familiar; and he inclines to yield the palm of excellence to that of Cowper, in which

he differs from many critics, but is, nevertheless, right. He did that justice to the natural genius of Hogg, which the *Edinburgh* attempted and could not, and which the *Quarterly* has never attempted at all; and in his disquisition on Burns, he has understood him both as a man and a poet, which has not always happened to critics. That high efforts of imagination are yet endured in the land, we may thank John Wilson.

There are other periodicals which occasionally contain criticisms of no common merit: those of the *Atlas*, the *Spectator*, the *Examiner*, and the *Scotsman*, though sometimes hasty, and sometimes severe, are above the common order; and several of the Magazines exhibit fine taste and feeling. Two writers of different powers, as well as sexes, have lately aided the general cause of genius: I allude to the authors of 'England and the English,' and 'the Female Characters of Shakspeare.' In the first, Mr. Bulwer has maintained the supremacy of natural genius, and claimed for feeling and imagination the elevation which other nations have assigned them; in the second, Mrs. Jameson has, with the most delicate tact and discrimination, revealed, as it were, the secrets of her sex, and made us acquainted with female nature as

it appeared to Shakspeare. In doing this, they have fulfilled the highest duties of criticism: Bulwer has sunk party spirit and dismissed the frivolities of faction: he looks at the genius which the land produces, and seeks to obtain for it that justice which God intended by creating it, and which princes and powers refuse to concede: he claims for sense, and worth, and talent, that distinction among men personally, which they have mentally, and recommends a union among the sons of the morning to recover their birthright. Mrs. Jameson proves that the natural pictures which poets draw are the loveliest and best; that the mental portraits of Shakspeare's glorious, yet womanly heroines, are worth seven acres of painted canvas, where we have only posture, and form, and colour: in doing this, she vindicates the dignity of invention, and advocates the cause for which Wordsworth penned his 'Excursion,' and Bulwer wrote his last and ablest work, 'England and the English.'

I HAVE now written what I promised—namely, a brief Biographical History of British Literature during the last Fifty Years. If I have done that ill which thousands could do better, I am not to be blamed, since I only undertook to show what a peasant thought and felt concerning the chief men of his country: let the learned and the gifted declare their opinions also, and correct and modify the crude and imperfect notions which have arisen from a humbler source. The little I have done, has been done conscientiously. I am only afraid that the freedom of my remarks—my praise more, perhaps, than my censure—may have offended some for whom personally I have a high respect. Nor has the article been written without pain: I have had to speak of the dead—of mighty men who were my friends: their departure has reminded me that others of the sons of light are getting into years, and may soon quit us, without hope of having the void which they shall leave filled as they have filled it.

I have not attempted to form a system, and show our chief men as sections of a scientific arrangement: the period which I have taken is only a fragment: I have shown but a portion of our history, of which the end is not come. Such classifications are matters rather of imagination than reality: in our island, individual genius grows up like a tree by the river side; it is subject to no academic trimmings and prunings; it is left to the freedom of its own will, and has no censors to check, nor princes who admonish. Like the judges of Israel, each man of talent does what is right in his own eyes: the poets of this land stand singly and alone. Cowper has no followers more than Burns: who has imitated Crabbe?—is any one like Scott?—who resembles Southey, or calls Wordsworth master? All these great men stand singly—they are without forerunners or followers. It is true, that ingenious critics saw Young revive in Cowper; Allan Ramsay in Burns; and the old Minstrels in Scott;—nay, Southey, it seems, is of the school of Wordsworth. It is easy for fancy to detect small points of resemblance between two portraits, the chief features of which are essentially different. For my own part, I see no reason to go beyond the province of critical biography, for

the sake of drawing nice distinctions, or making fanciful classifications.

Some one has desired me to describe the influence which men of genius have in this land: that can be done in a word—they have none. The editors of two or three leading newspapers have more to say with the country and the government, than all the bards who have breathed for these fifty years. The influence of genius is recorded in its fortunes. Chatterton drank poison, for he could not find bread; Johnson was refused the means of improving his health abroad; Burns, at his death, had neither bread in his house, nor a penny in his pocket; Crabbe died a poor parson—preferment did not find him out; Scott crushed himself in attempting independence, and his country refuses to save his books from the auctioneer; Byron was exiled and died all but cursing the land his genius adorns; Coleridge has been deprived of his small pension; Wordsworth lives by distributing stamps; Southey has a pint of thin wine a-day from the king; Moore has found verse, like virtue, is its own reward; Hogg picks a mutton bone on Yarrow; and Wilson lives by moral philosophy. I bid the subject farewell.

THE EFFECT OF THE CULTIVATION OF ORIENTAL LITERATURE ON THE GENERAL LITERATURE OF GREAT BRITAIN.

IN the latter end of the seventeenth, and during the early part of the eighteenth century, several distinguished English scholars began to direct their attention to the literature of Central and Western Asia. Before that time, Arabic and Persic were cultivated chiefly on account of their connexion with Hebrew, and the great aim of those who recommended their study, was to enlarge the field of Biblical criticism. Pococke, Ockley, Sale and others, soon discovered that the literature of Arabia and Persia had substantial claims on students; and, without depreciating its importance in elucidating the difficulties of the Old Testament, they showed that history might thence be enriched with important facts, and the speculations of philosophy enlarged, by contemplating new and curious modifications of intellect. They succeeded so far as to have the phrase "Oriental literature" naturalized in our language, but unfortunately

their success limited the acceptation of the term to that family of languages having affinity to Hebrew, which are now usually called Semitic.

In every department of literature, the English mind seems to have remained quiescent from the accession of the House of Brunswick to the era of the French Revolution; we had elegant writing, but little of sound thinking, and still less of profound investigation. The few additions made to the stores of Oriental literature, were, for the most part, taken at second-hand from the French: venerable dust settled on the magnificent collections of Eastern manuscripts in our universities, and, but for the oration annually pronounced at Oxford, the very name of Arabic stood a fair chance of being forgotten within its precincts. But while this lethargy prevailed in England, a remote dependency contained in it a few individuals, whose exertions were not damped by the apathy of their countrymen; scholars, who loved learning for its own sake, and who encountered severe study with scarce any hope of fame, and with none of remuneration. Warren Hastings, a name to be pronounced with respect in the world of letters,

whatever may be its fate in the world of politics, gave all the encouragement and aid in his power to these zealous men; and, trifling as was the amount of patronage bestowed, to it the world stands indebted for the first opening of the literature of Hindostan—for the discovery, that India, over which so many conquerors had passed in wrath, possessed a language of unrivalled richness, variety, and extent; a philosophy, beside which that of Pythagoras was almost recent, and the speculations of Plato tame; poetry, more purely mental than any with which we were before acquainted, and sciences that had existed from a period which baffled calculation. The very magnitude of these discoveries was fatal to their popularity in England; perhaps it was unfortunate that they were announced by an author, who, conscious of his brilliancy of style, was in too great a hurry to write,—for this unquestionably was the great failing of Sir William Jones. Much had been done in Indian learning before the commencement of the nineteenth century, but the knowledge of its extent and value was confined to a very limited circle; and even so late as the year 1825, Sir Graves C. Haughton, in the pre-

face to his Bengali Dictionary, found it necessary to apologize for the study of Indian literature, and to demonstrate some few of its advantages.

The British expedition to Egypt directed public attention to Western Asia, and the countries once ruled by the Fatemite Khaliphs. A multitude of works appeared, to gratify the curiosity that had been thus excited, but few, if any of them, survived the occasion, and certainly none merited a longer existence.

From that period, however, dates the discovery, that the literature of Asiatic nations is even more diversified than that of European; in fact, people found by experience, what common sense might have taught them, that in the East, as in the West, every language had its own peculiar writers—every nation its own characteristic literature. The marked features of the Arabian writers were found to be different from those of the Persian—the Turkish literature was unlike either; Sanscrit stood completely alone; from what little was known of the Chinese, it manifestly formed a class to itself; and it was suspected that the same character should be given of the Armenian, the Tartar, and the Singhalese, if ever they should be developed by further researches. But, notwithstanding this

discovery, the great bulk of Englishmen continued to believe, as many do at the present day, that Oriental literature is a uniform something, compounded of the Bible and the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, of which the Hebrew language was the most valuable portion.

Though the differences between the languages and literature of Arabia and Persia are sufficiently striking, it has been so much the fashion to join them that we shall treat of both together. The amount of knowledge possessed in this department of Orientalism at the beginning of the nineteenth century was very trifling. On the Mohammedan religion there existed no good work but Sale's Koran; Ockley's History of the Saracens and the early volumes of the Universal History contained all the historical information possessed respecting these countries; their geography was, in many instances, little better than a blank; the best description of Mohammedan manners and customs, was a coarse and vulgar book, written by Pitts, of Exeter. Of romantic literature there was a more plentiful supply, but the quality was not equal to the quantity, for it had passed through the medium of a French translation. Eastern Romance was, however, destined to give an

Oriental tone to a portion of the literature of the nineteenth century, and it produced 'Thalaba' and 'Vathek.' 'Thalaba,' in so far as it partakes of the general character of Southey's epics, lies beyond the range of the present inquiry, but, as a specimen of Oriental romance, adapted to English taste, it seems to have failed, simply because it is not sufficiently "wild and wondrous." The writer seems not to have known that the magnificent fictions of the Simoorg, the Domdaniel, the Genii, and the Afrites, belong to Persia, and not to Arabia; he took them divested of no small portion of their original sublimity, and he even then softened their tone, fearing that they might be regarded as monsters, rather than prodigies. Every attempt to rationalise fiction must fail; the *speciosa miracula rerum* must either be taken or wholly rejected; I think that 'Thalaba' would perhaps have been a popular poem, had Dr. Southey given the full reins to his imagination, and preserved the fictions, on which the poem is based, in their original purity. 'Vathek' may be quoted as a proof of this; it is far more extravagant than 'Thalaba,' and was, therefore, successful.

The most perfect specimen of Arabic romance

is 'Antar,' and it bears a singular similarity to the chivalrous romances of Europe. Don Quixote would have given it the foremost place in his library, but unfortunately it was imported into Europe when the taste for chivalry was all but extinct. The adventures of Hatim Tai, recently translated by Duncan Forbes, are purely of Persian origin, having derived nothing from Arabia but the name of the hero.

The purpose of this essay being merely to trace the effect of Oriental literature on the general mind of England, it is not necessary to make any remarks on publications designed merely for the learned ; the works of the Ouseleys, however, do not come altogether within this class, for they have been the unacknowledged source whence the compilers of what are called popular works have derived most of their information respecting Central and Western Asia. It is to be regretted, that the writers did not devote more of their attention to the history and literature of the Caspian provinces, where a branch of the Kaianian dynasty, to which Cyrus and Cambyses belonged, ruled over a limited territory, even so late as the period of the Mongolian invasion. Some pre-

cious remains of the library of Alamoot may be found in the mountain districts of Ghilan and Mazenderan, from which might be obtained some explanation of the almost irreconcilable difference between the native and Grecian accounts of Persian history. The inconsistency of the statements made by Firdausi and Mirkhond, with those of Herodotus and Xenophon, whose narratives are familiar to us from childhood, led many persons to conclude that the former were mere writers of romance; nor has this delusion been dispelled by the exertions of the Ouseleys, or the Persian History of Sir John Malcolm. The fact is, that Firdausi, from whom all subsequent writers on Persian history have borrowed, was a native of Khorasan, he consequently incorporated in the Sháh Námeḥ only those legends which were popular in the Eastern provinces, where, until the age of Alexander, the name of a European nation was never heard, and very little known of any transactions west of the Caspian gates. Among the publications announced by the Oriental Translation Committee, is the History of Mazenderan and Tabaristan, from which some information respecting the historic legends in the western and northern parts of Persia may be

expected. It is to be hoped that some scholar will endeavour to procure materials for this part of Persian history, and remedy the chief defect in Sir John Malcolm's work. Price's Moham-
medan History ranks next in utility and interest to that just mentioned; but its circulation was impeded, and its fame obscured, by the meagre compilation published by Mills.

A new impulse was given to the study of Oriental literature by the formation of the Bible Society, and the consequent stimulus given to Missionary exertions. A very brief experience sufficed to prove that a missionary should know something of the religion *from* which, as well as *to* which, he desires to convert the Heathen. But with the Oriental religions there was found to be mixed up the historic legends of the several nations, and, consequently, there was a necessity for studying the history, the antiquities, and the popular traditions of Eastern countries. On all these topics the Missionary Societies collected and diffused much valuable information, and, whimsically enough, seemed heartily ashamed of having done so. It was supposed that all the attention which literature received was just so much abstracted from the direct objects of the institution; in

consequence of this erroneous impression, the benefits which the world of letters has derived from the labours of the missionaries, though of no trifling amount, have been far more limited than their opportunities of acquiring and diffusing information. It is but justice to add, that there are symptoms of a change operating in the several religious societies; they no longer regard connexion with literature as a contamination; the course of previous instruction given to those who are candidates for the missionary office has been enlarged, and we find the labours of one missionary in the list of works published by the Oriental Translation Committee.

It was to be expected that the vast empire which England had acquired in the East, should, at an early period, have attracted the attention of religious societies; casual notices of its mythology, and the controversy respecting the claims of Hindoo astronomy to a remote antiquity, nearly at the same moment directed public attention to Indian literature. The treasures collected by Colebrooke, Wilson, Haughton, Wilks, and others, came upon the world by surprise. The claims of the Sanscrit language have been already stated; it must be added, that its diffi-

culties equal its claims. Our scholars were startled by the magnitude and variety of the subject—to acquire any knowledge of it would manifestly require the labours of an entire life, and few are to be found in England, capable of such devotion.

But there was also in Sanscrit literature a total want of connexion with any of our associations or reminiscences: the gods of Mount Merú had no similarity to the gods of Mount Olympus; the Hindoo mythology was so utterly unlike the beautiful fictions of Greece and Rome, to which from boyhood we have been accustomed, that it was generally regarded as repulsive.

Southey made an attempt to render the Indian mythology popular, by making it the basis of his extraordinary poem, ‘The Curse of Kehama;’ unfortunately, our information on the subject was at that time very limited; many of the most beautiful and poetic portions of Hindoo legends and fictions have been discovered subsequent to the publication of that work; had they been at the disposal of the poet, we think that the result of his experiment would have been more decisive.

Colebrook’s account of Indian metaphysics

and science, Haughton's notices of Hindoo legislation, and Wilson's translation of the Hindoo dramas, have had a slight, but still a perceptible influence on the general literature of England. We trace it in the more correct notions that prevail respecting the history of philosophy, the progress of civilization, and the mode in which the human intellect was gradually developed. But the errors of their predecessors have greatly checked the extension of the influence of these admirable men; some of the first Sanscrit students were in too great a hurry to write; they published partial, crude, and incomplete conceptions, which they subsequently retracted themselves, or saw refuted by others. In many instances they were duped by their Brahminical teachers, and consequently gave vent to absurdities almost exceeding credibility. Wilford's persuasion, that he found Great Britain and Ireland described in Sanscrit books as "the Sacred Islands of the West," is a notable instance, and yet it is by no means the most extraordinary that might be mentioned.

Notwithstanding the exertions of the lamented Leyden and his successors, the literature of the Indo-Chinese nations is as yet generally unknown in England. The Buddhistic creed is

professed by nearly two hundred millions; its metaphysics offer strange coincidences with the early heresies that corrupted Christianity; its hierarchy is wondrously similar to that of the Romish Church; but anything like a satisfactory account of this religion is not to be found in our language. Yet we venture to guess, that whenever the philosophic and poetic features of Buddhism are investigated, a very important addition will be made to our stock of ideas.

The Mohammedan population of India has only recently engaged our attention; Ferishta's history, and the 'Siyar-ul-Mutakherin' show that the Moslem writers of Hindostan far surpass those of Persia as narrators of fact; we should like to see some specimens of their fictions, for we have been informed that they are remarkable for delicate perception of feeling, and accurate delineation of manners. The account of their customs in the 'Qanoon e Islam,' and the very delightful work of Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali, prove that a novel founded on the habits of this people would certainly be entertaining, and probably successful.

The publications of Sir G. Staunton created a lively but momentary interest in the literature

of China. This would certainly have been increased had the novels translated by Thoms and Davis been fairly brought before the public; but no exertion was made by the publishers to direct attention towards them, and, in this struggling age of puffery and quackery, they fell almost still-born from the press. Yet Sir Walter Scott never planned a story of more powerful interest than 'The Fortunate Union,' translated by Davis. The Chinese drama is also a subject worthy of more attention than has been paid to it. From a Chinese original Voltaire derived his best tragedy, 'The Orphan of China,' and there are many others that might easily be adapted to the European stage: we should particularly mention 'The Sorrows of Han,' which has been translated by Mr. Davis.

Lord Byron's poems, published on his return from his travels, again directed public attention to the East, and they produced from Moore the most truly Oriental poem in our language. "The merits of *Lalla Rookh*," said the late Sir John Malcolm, "I am well able to appreciate; in it the author has combined the truth of the historian with the genius of the poet, and the vigorous classical taste of his own country with the fervid imagination of the East." The effect

of this work was permanent; it naturalized in our language the boldest and most beautiful traits of Oriental fancy; it made us feel at home in the very centre of Asia.

But Byron's influence extended to prose; 'Anastasius' appeared, and Turkey, with its varied population, was to us as a land with whose every feature we were familiar. It was, however, a work of more power than information: we only fancied that the picture was complete; dazzled by the outlines, we did not miss the details—indeed, we were too completely lost in admiration to think about them. 'Hajji Baba' appeared next, and was just as remarkable for the contrary characteristic; the great merit of this work is its fidelity in minute details; it is to Persia what *Gil Blas* is to Spain,—a better description of habits, manners, and feelings than any travellers have ever yet given. Of a similar, but in some respects of a superior character, is 'The Kuzzilbash;' inferior in power and poetic conception to *Anastasius*, decidedly below *Hajji Baba* in verisimilitude, it displays a more intimate acquaintance with Oriental character than either. The *Kuzzilbash* has, besides, an historical value; its portraiture of *Nadir Shah* is excellent; and knowing the variety of sources

that supplied the several traits, we should not hesitate to say that it ought to rank in the very highest class of historical characters.

Morier and Fraser have given second parts of their respective works: Cervantes alone succeeded in this hazardous experiment. The second parts were failures; all that can be said in their favour, is, that they possess more merit than the miserable imitations of them.

Unless we have learned badly to read the signs of the times, the future character of Oriental literature in England will be determined by the conduct of those who manage the Oriental Translation Fund. Never was there a project better entitled to public support—never an institution seemingly more disposed to hide its light under a bushel. While the press absolutely groans under the weight of praise bestowed upon those who have undertaken to diffuse knowledge, scarcely is one word said in favour of those who have undertaken the more arduous—the more important—and the more beneficial task of accumulating information. Before passing any judgment on the works already published by the Committee, it is but simple justice to state the disadvantages which it has had to encounter, and to which it is still exposed.

The Committee cannot afford to pay the translators of Oriental works, and, consequently, rests for support on voluntary contributions. Two evils necessarily arise from this : the managers have no voice in the selection of subjects, and they feel too deeply the delicacy of their position to criticise the works sent them with severity. Besides, their works come before a public badly prepared for their reception : to read any one of them with profit, requires a quantity of knowledge such as can rarely be found ; and assuredly there is not in the world a person qualified to enjoy them all : our Arabic and Persic scholars delight in one class, the lovers of Sanscrit in another, while the Chinese proficients care nothing for the former, and attend to a literature of a perfectly different character. The number of Oriental scholars in England is, we know, very limited ; but each publication of the Committee is suited only to a section of that limited number. It would be an obvious improvement, were the Committee to classify their publications, both as regards language and subject, and appoint sub-committees to inspect the publications in each division. Each sub-committee should publish a manual, detailing the extent of the literature intrusted to its charge—the ad-

vantage to be derived from acquaintance with it—the amount of it already presented to the European public—the quantity which was about to be added to the previous store—and a candid exposition of the deficiencies in our knowledge, to guide future researches. To such sub-committees should be intrusted also the preparation of prefaces, notes, and now and then an index,—matters in which these publications are sadly deficient: perhaps it would be advisable in some cases to prepare manuals, or brief guides to the study of a particular branch of literature or history, in order to prepare the general reader for the works of the native authors. The rule of the Society, which excludes the republication of works already translated, though copies of them may be rare, or the translations badly executed, is necessary to its plan; but, assuredly, there ought to be some notice given of the works translated abroad—not mere critical notices, but extracts of the most important passages, and summaries of all the information they contain. It may be said, that the adoption of these measures would require more money than the Committee has at its command;—doubtless it would—but there is an item in their accounts now followed by a very miserable sum, “Profit by sale

of books," which would, if more exertions were made, soon display a greater show of significant figures. A less noticed, but, perhaps, a more injurious circumstance, is the custom of giving unintelligible titles to the publications. How few would suspect that the 'Siyár-ul-Mutakherin,' means a very interesting history of the Mohammedan power in India, or the 'Zohfut-ul-Mujahideen,' an amusing narrative of the contests between the Portuguese and Arabians!

When the disadvantages of not having a power of choice are considered, the selection of the works already published may seem to be a matter beyond the scope of legitimate criticism; but as, in most instances, the subjects of the works chosen for translation really merit high praise, it may not be unprofitable to cast a rapid glance over the Committee's list.

The Travels of Ibn Batuta and Macarius, with the geographical work of Sádik Isfaháni, are valuable additions to our stores of treatises on oriental topography; it is to be lamented that Professor Lee, the translator of the first, has made his notes too learned, and has quoted too liberally from the original Arabic. Macarius contains much ecclesiastical information. Isfaháni's treatise is very valuable. A still more

important work is Klaproth's translation of a Japanese account of Corea, Yesso, and the islands in the Chinese archipelago. The histories are well chosen, and, with one unfortunate exception, well translated: that of the Afghans, not being complete, can hardly as yet be fairly estimated. Neuman's translations from the Armenian, elucidate the struggles which that ancient Christian kingdom had to maintain, and throw new light on the state of Asia during the Crusades. Mitchell's 'Maritime Wars of the Turks' should be read by all desirous to have an accurate knowledge of the history of the great struggle between the Christians and Ottomans for supremacy in the Mediterranean; the translation has been highly praised by Mr. Von Hammer. Unfortunately, the interesting 'Annals of Naima' fell into less able hands, and is so full of errors that it is nearly useless. Shea's version of Mirkhond deserves the highest praise; it is to be wished that the Committee could remunerate him for a complete translation of this great historical work. The plan pursued by Mr. Atkinson in the translation of the Sháh-Námeh cannot be commended: the mixture of poetry and prose, literal and loose translation, exact version and abridgment, render the work

incongruous and incomplete. There is another translation by Mr. Atkinson—the ‘Domestic Manners of the Persian Women,’ a very amusing specimen of Oriental humour. The ‘Siyár-ul-Mutakherin,’ and the ‘Zohfut-ul-Mujahideen,’ have been already mentioned.

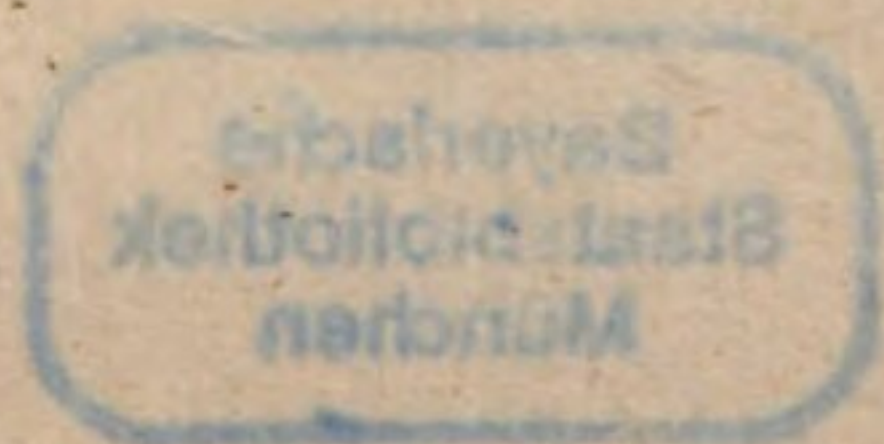
The Committee’s list is singularly rich in autobiographies ; it contains those of the Emperors Jahanguer and Timúr, of the poet Ali Hazin, and of a Malayan family. To these must be added the Life of Hafiz Rehmút Khan, written by his son, and of the Emperor Humayún, written by one of his Majesty’s confidential servants. All of these would probably have been popular, had the translators been a little more careful to accommodate them to the English taste.

In the Belles-Lettres, the Committee has published Davis’s Chinese novels and dramas, already mentioned ; a French translation of a very curious Chinese drama, called, ‘The Circle of Chalk’ ; ‘The Adventures of Hatim Tai,’ a popular Persian romance ; a Singhalese poem, illustrating the demon-worship in that island ; and a volume of miscellanies. With the exception of some portions of the miscellaneous volume, all these works deserve to be naturalized in our language.

In science, the committee has published only Ben Músa's Algebra, a very curious work : of the philosophic poetry of India, they have only published 'The Raghuvansa ;' and in theology only a Buddhistic catechism. These works are manifestly calculated only for a limited number of readers.

It remains now to cast a rapid glance over those portions of the East whose literary treasures are most likely to repay the attention of scholars, and which have been as yet imperfectly, if at all, examined. Among the foremost should be placed the Mongolian nations, whose history now occupies so large a share of the attention of the Russian literati ; next to these should be placed the tribes in the mountain districts between the Caspian and the Caucasus, where many precious works may have escaped the ravages of the several barbarous hosts that devastated Persia and Syria ; but at the same time the hope of finding translations of the lost classics in the Armenian and Georgian languages seems founded on very remote possibilities.

Tibet is a field as yet scarcely explored, and the same may be said of the Indo-Chinese nations. In India itself, there are many works in the modern dialects which would well repay



the labours of a translator. The royal, collegiate and monastic libraries in Spain, contain Moorish manuscripts of great historical value, which would probably be lent on application. Even if unworthy of being translated entire, they might be made the basis of a Chrestomathy similar to that of the Baron de Sacy.

Perhaps, if their funds increase to a sufficient extent, the Committee may be induced to enlarge the sphere of its operations, and undertake generally the task of collecting Oriental information, on a plan somewhat similar to that proposed by Schlegel; but before this can be done, the institution must be regarded as a national undertaking, and receive a larger share of public support than it has yet obtained. The day when a parliamentary grant might be obtained, to aid individual exertion, is gone past; but if an appeal was made to the good sense of the British people, pointing out the advantages likely to result from the labours of the Committee, it could scarcely fail of success, and an increased flood of light from the East—its source literally and metaphorically—might reasonably be expected.

THE END.

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